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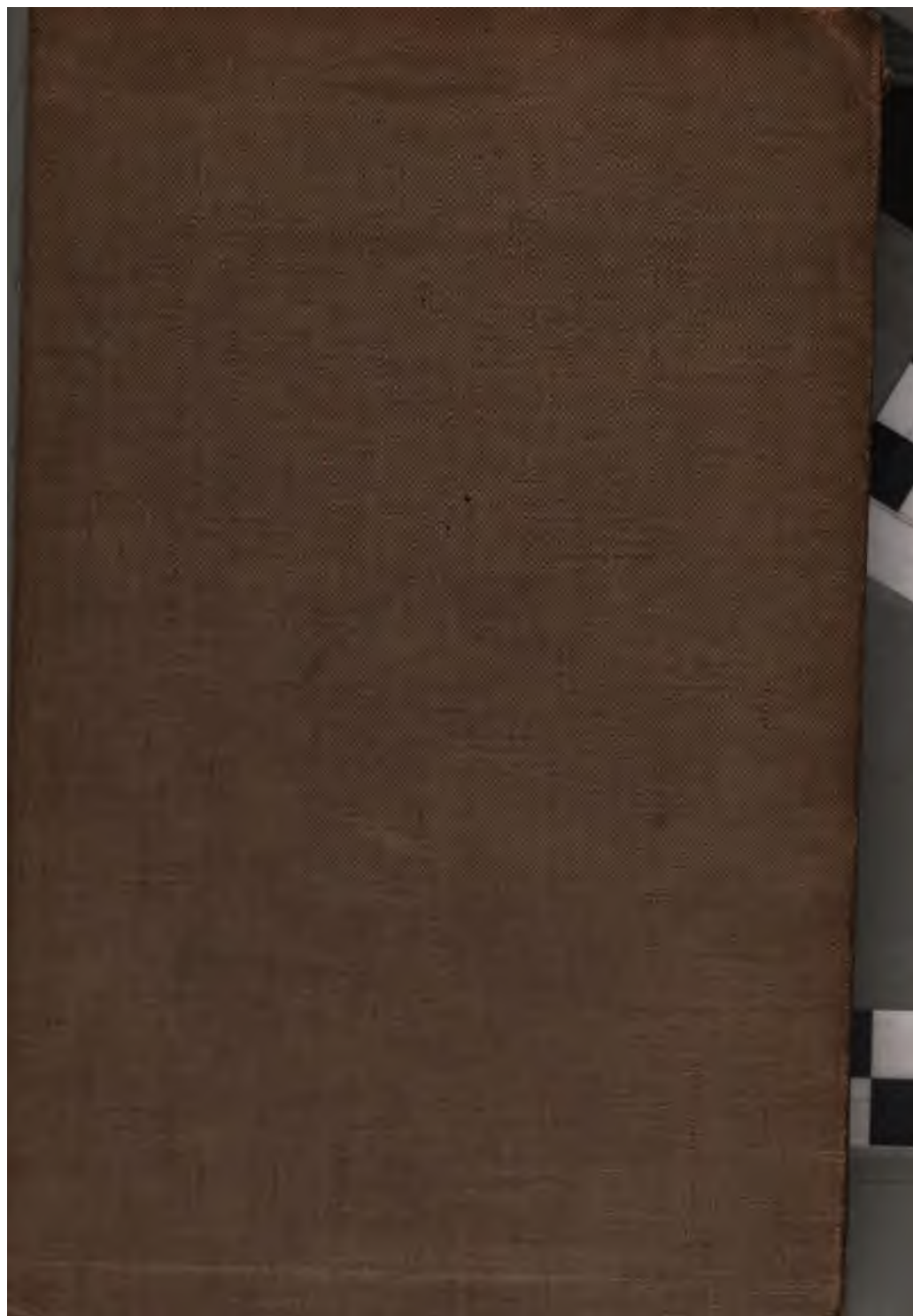
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To Miss Nellie Jaques  
with best wishes from  
the author, Arthur Bridge  
Sept. 15/1894

May 19/1947

To Bunny Bridge  
from Enid Lloyd.

Author presentation copy,  
Chiswick Press

FROM A BOOK FUND COMMEMORATING  
RUTH GERALDINE ASHEN  
CLASS OF 1931

It's a sad thing  
    when a man is to be so soon forgotten  
And the shining in his soul  
    gone from the earth  
With no thing remaining;

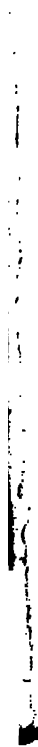
And it's a sad thing  
    when a man shall die  
And forget love  
    which is the shiningness of life;

But it's a sadder thing  
    that a man shall forget love  
And he not dead but walking in the field  
    of a May morning  
And listening to the voice of the thrush.

— R.G.A., in *A Yearbook of  
Stanford Writing*, 1931

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## ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS



# ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS

OR

THE PRETTY PURITAN

A DRAMA

BY

ARTHUR BRIDGE

LONDON

GEORGE BELL & SONS

AND NEW YORK

1894

AN 50882



CHISWICK PRESS:—CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.  
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TO

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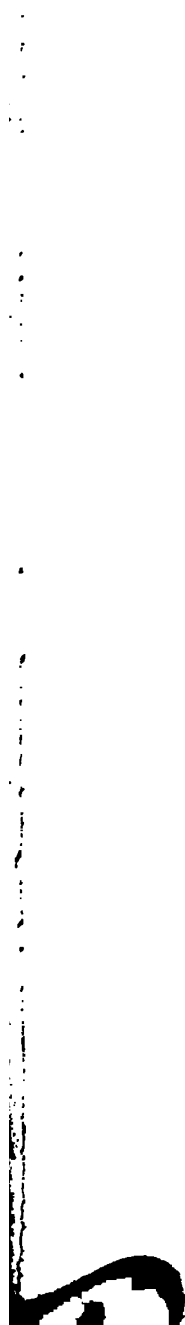
LORD COLERIDGE, P.C., F.R.S., D.C.L.,

ETC., ETC.,

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND,

A TRIBUTE OF ESTEEM AND REGARD FROM

THE AUTHOR.



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

OLIVER CROMWELL, Protector.  
HELEN, Cromwell's Niece.  
CHARLES I.  
HERBERT, his attendant.  
SIR HENRY COURTLAND, Cavalier.  
MURIEL COURTLAND, his cousin.  
BISHOP JUXON.  
ELIZABETH, } the King's children.  
GLOUCESTER, }  
MILTON.  
JOHN, servant to Muriel.  
Old Witch.  
JACK, the Jailor.  
Roundhead Officer.  
Little Girl.  
Ghost.  
SPEAKER WIDRINGTON.  
SIR RICHARD ONSLOW.  
COLONEL JONES.

Lords, Ladies, Soldiers, Sailors, Citizens, Apprentices,  
Heralds, etc.



# Roundheads and Cavaliers;

or, the Pretty Puritan.

## ACT I.

SCENE I. *London. A Room in CROMWELL'S house. The night before the sentence to death of CHARLES I. CROMWELL walking up and down greatly agitated.*

*Cromwell.* In histories of nations there are times

When all a people's feverish expectation  
Is fixed upon one man. He, greatly standing,  
Must therefore greatly fall or higher rise  
In estimation of his God and country,  
And thus, so weighted with this conscious fact,  
His soul moves onward heavily and strives  
Like laden ship struggling to reach the shore,

B

2      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

And as she labours through the surging foam,  
Perchance mistaking some false light for true,  
With hope steers toward th' imagined harbour,  
                 then

Crashes upon the rocks—in rush the waves,  
Blindly she staggers, reels, and lurching forward  
Down headlong plunges 'neath the boiling brine,  
Seduced by light which never came from heaven,  
The wild, weird laughter of the mocking wind,  
And howl of tempest, and the dreadful din  
Of waves down-dashed upon her dying ear.  
What if I too, deluded, miss the way?  
O our deceitful hearts!—This flattering world  
Oft smiles approval on success not right.  
How careful in such case a man should be  
To clear his mind, his conscience closely try,  
That no ill passions wait upon the deed;  
No thoughts of self-advancement, danger, death,  
No craven whisper of the soul that now  
Thus far on voyage return were perilous,  
And therefore on despite of God and man.

*Enter* MILTON.

*Milton.* Cromwell alone, uneasy and cast  
                 down?

*Cromwell.* Milton, the fate of England trembling hangs

Upon a single thread. Would it become me  
Not to be then uneasy and cast down,  
When this great nation waits whether to see  
On England's night more glorious dawn shall  
rise,

Or clouded days dark with disastrous end ?  
I look for light, and all the light seems hid.  
I dare not say God hides His face from me ;  
Yet He for purpose of His own hath left  
My soul unto itself, and as I fearfully  
Question her meaning, lo, she answers, Death !  
The King must die or Cromwell be accursed,  
As false to conscience and his country's cause.  
I look to heaven and the heavens are mute ;  
I look to earth and men evade reply.  
Thus I am left to pilot my lone soul  
Through an untried, unknown, dark, dangerous  
sea ;

For confirmation of this dread decree  
Ask of the heights above, the depths beneath,  
And they'll not answer. Say, what meaneth  
this

Silence unbroke by man and hush of heaven ?



4      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

A disapproval or implied consent ?  
If disapproval—then blind is my soul  
To all the better instincts of the just,  
And I am cursed indeed with a warped mind,  
Mistaking wrong for right. Yet if consent,  
Tell me hath Truth no warmth of recognition  
That thus like statue with fast frozen lips  
Stands she so unmoved, passionless, and calm,  
That none can read her stony, sphinx-like gaze ?

*Milton.* My friend, accuse not truth, do her no  
wrong,

Let her and Falsehood grapple. Who knows not  
That Truth is strong and next Almighty God.  
Her noble meaning in her earnest eyes  
Shines clearly purposed for all men to see.  
Persuading flattery, and fawning prayer,  
The crafty plans and cunning policies,  
(Deep-drawn device of men) her soul abhors ;  
Not any bond needs she, nor pledge or vow,  
But she will parley with the pure in heart  
And thoroughly her counsel wise disclose,  
For Truth upholds the universe and is  
The life-pulse of this world. Could we but see,  
All things declare her presence—the lone star  
Upon a lonelier sea ; the summer winds,

Breath of the beauteous morn ; the merry day  
That wakes on woodlands, meadow, moor, and  
mere ;

Or mirk of midnight, when by many a cloud  
The moon lies hid and silence reigns in heaven ;  
The cheerful flicker of the fire-lit hearth,  
Man's habitation, yea the hearts of all  
That breathe the breath of life, for naught so  
high,

So low, so mean, so poor, but feels the power  
Of Truth support its being and infold.  
And when a soul upon itself is cast,  
As thou art, Cromwell, in this hour of need,  
And of its progress is own pilot made,  
Heaven gives this greater glory to the man,  
That he being true unto himself may show  
To mocking spirits of malignant hell—  
The angels watching from their star-lit thrones—  
What depth of grandeur in the soul resides,  
How much immortal, when its mighty love  
Is fixed on God, its country, and its cause.  
Be not downcast, then, true, tried friend of mine,  
Where vestal Conscience throws her vigil light,  
Though vaunting darkness dim th' imprisoned  
stars,

*Cromwell.* Ah! as to his death,

*Milton.* I could have wished it had been otherwise.

**Cromwell.** You say 'tis just, then, how injurious, Milton?

Whilst that the people disapprove the deed,  
It were not done. For oh, should Liberty  
Force a reluctant nation? E'en for good  
Never must she assume the tyrant's garb.  
With slow and painful footsteps, patience vast,  
She travels toward her end—a nation free,  
Just, noble, generous, renowned in arts,

Which yet shall England be. Three centuries  
hence

(Methinks a vision 'fore my mind doth pass)  
A queen shall reign courting the paths of peace,  
The lily flowers within her castle walls,  
Mercy and Truth stand round about her throne,  
And Liberty, a lovely woman grown,  
With wet, impassioned eyes pleads for her own ;  
Nor pleads in vain, for by her words inspired,  
Casting that long passivity aside,  
Her sons rise up with eager ardour fired  
To do the right—their glory and their pride.  
Then shall the head of cursèd Tyranny  
Be crushed, and Liberty, fair Albion's child,  
Smile on all nations, and with peaceful arms  
Outstretched embrace the world. No more her  
eyes

With burning tears are dim, no more exiled  
A captive mourns she in fell fetters chained.  
For every wave that breaks on England's beach,  
Her flowers that open to the dawn of day,  
Her birds that in green thickets blithely sing,  
Her mariners, the monarchs of the main,  
Crowned kings of commerce, whose proud, full-  
set sails

8      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

Whiten the wave, swift couriers of the sea,  
Her doughty squires, her burly yeomen brave,  
Her princely merchants, and her multitudes  
That throng her busy streets, her happy vales,  
Well-watered by the silver stream that brings  
Her costly argosies from many a clime  
To lordly London, city of the free,  
Whose like the broad world boasts not.    Yea,  
   these all

Live, breathe, inhale the air of Liberty.  
For She her golden head exultingly  
Lifts in this glorious isle, home of the free,  
Which Nature made her own beloved seat  
To place her favourite race, to win from Time  
The freedom of the world, when war shall be  
A tale of long ago, to children told.  
Then, this same England shall build a state  
Mightier than any that the world hath seen  
With Empire more vast.  
From frozen Florida to where the sun  
Lights up the turbaned faces of the East,  
Where Sikh, Mahomed, and the Hindu pray  
Each to his god, or where the sailor rounds  
The Cape of Storms to Afric's inland lakes,  
Then to th' Australian Land, fifth continent ;

From West to East, from North to South immense  
Extend the barriers of her empire free.

Then peace shall wake the summer morning fair  
And laughing Liberty make glad the air,  
And Industry her noble arts display  
And brother bless each brother on his way.

*Cromwell.* Milton, too late thy wish. My soul  
hath thought

Much on this matter, and the king must die.  
Last night sleep came not to these weary eyes,  
Hour after hour, worn with deep troubled thought,  
The pale moon peeping through yon frozen glass  
Hath found me sitting, then uprising, then  
Standing stone still, then pacing to and fro  
As if to find conclusion in some corner,  
Then opening wide my window to the night,  
The faint illumination of the stars  
Led my thoughts up to Him who placed them  
there,

And I fell down and prayed and felt His peace  
That passeth understanding. So my thoughts  
Rose out of prayer so purged and pure and strong  
That I saw clearly. Prayer's a lightning flash  
That in dark night illumines the landscape round,  
Showing the road we otherwise should miss.

each con-

ing—

die!

unfeigned

and!

confirmed

to our

grows

made,

thou

10      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

*Milton.* Yet when I entered, Cromwell, you  
were so

Movèd in mind that I felt for you much.

*Cromwell.* Milton, you know not me, my pas-  
sions great,

My weakness, want of skill, yea, every way  
Unfitted this great work—yet, strange to say,  
Accepted by the Lord, to serve His land,  
God's glorious dispensation points out this.  
I feel myself by strange force lifted on,  
I cannot tell thee why—by night, by day,  
Urged forward to the work. As sure as God  
Appeared to Jacob by the lonely way,  
And in the dreams of night to Joseph taught,  
He hath directed me, indeed he hath!  
But man of woman born hath moments weak  
When thought comes whispering doubt unto the  
soul.

“Art thou He that should come?” the Baptist  
asked,

Who first proclaimed him to a wondering world  
When Jordan's river overflowed her banks  
To kiss the feet of her approaching Lord.  
So I, too, having found the truth, there came  
Some hours of doubt unto my soul this day,



And thus you found me, but your speech confirmed

My better purpose, and again I'm strong  
And cannot wrong myself to save the King—  
That man of blood must die!

*Milton.*

Alas, must die!

*Cromwell.* If from the jealousy of unfeigned  
love

I say a few words to thy listening ear,  
And play the fool a little, pardon me.  
If I do know my heart I love thee well.  
Then, Milton, list the utterance of my mind!  
Hath not most marvellous Providence confirmed  
Our Cause, the Cause of God? Dear to our  
hearts

Who oft, so oft have ventured life for it.  
But the Lord hardens the King's heart, he grows  
More shifty every day. The precepts old,  
That peoples are for kings and churches made,  
Saints for pope's government, begin to be  
Exploded from all English free-born hearts.  
Shall then this glorious august sunrise  
Of freedom in our land o'erclouded be?  
Oh, far from us the thought! say, couldst thou  
wish

12      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

Blood shed like water, and our brethren's bones  
Whitening a hundred fields, appeal in vain ?  
Shall papists, popish rites invade this land,  
The high proud spirit of the English race  
At mock and mercy of a despot king  
Ruled by no law, checked by no parliament ;  
The austere majesty of England wronged  
In all her ancient rights—her charters torn  
And scattered to the winds—once the proud boast  
Of this most beauteous island of the sea  
And wonder of far climes ? Should'st this thou  
wish,

Let the King live, not die ! Bring back the King !  
Let Tyranny once more stretch cruel hands  
Over this weeping land, and Civil War,  
That follows in her wake, redden our fields  
Again with gore of holy patriots slain ;  
Once more let brother bathe in brother's blood,  
The aged father gird his heavy sword  
Upon his trembling thigh, the senator  
Forsake the council chamber and in haste  
Search for his ancient arms, long laid aside  
Rusting on walls of his baronial hall ;  
Bid peaceful ploughmen leave their ploughs afield,  
And budding boys buckle the breast-plate on

To glut the throat of war—whilst many a wife,  
Maid, widow, mother, wail their dear ones slain !  
Which rather than to see, take Cromwell's life—  
I sooner would be rolled into the grave,  
Buried with infamy and dark dishonour,  
Than thus be false to this great trust imposed.

[*The sound of soldiers heard on the march.*

*Milton.* What is that regular and heavy noise ?

*Cromwell.* The tramp of armed men upon the  
march.

*Milton.* How far the frosty air carries the sound !  
Where go they thus so late ?

*Cromwell.* To Westminster.

The streets must all be lined with our troops,  
Some foolish pity might excite the crowd  
To tumult when they see the King pass by,  
And so we make provision.

*Milton.* I must go.

*Cromwell.* Shall you to-morrow come to see  
the trial ?

*Milton.* I must put pen to paper and write out  
A vindication for our country's ear,  
Lest long idolatry of custom rouse  
The ignorant ravings of the low-born crowd,  
Or superstitions of dull honest men

14      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

Sincere, but clinging to a wrongful cause,  
Therefore, we should be earliest in the field  
With sword and pen. Good-night! [*Opens the*  
*door.*] 'Tis freezing hard!

It were no wonder if there fell some snow,  
So heavy looks yon dun and sombre sky.

[*Goes out.*

*Cromwell.* Good-night, true friend of mine!

[*Aside.*] O noble mind,  
A lighthouse shining in an angry sea  
Rejoices not the sailor's heart so much  
As thou hast mine! [*Looks at his watch.*] 'Tis  
late.

Ho there without!

*Attendant.* My lord!

*Cromwell.* Bring those musicians that attend  
my state,  
And bid them play some soft and lulling air  
To charm my senses to the land of sleep!

[*Soft music plays.*

SCENE 2. *A House in the Country. A Drawing-room. LADY MURIEL seated within. Enter JOHN, a retainer.*

*John.* My lady, I was most expressly bid  
To see this note given safely to thy hand.

[*The LADY MURIEL opens it and reads :—*

“If the Lady Muriel would assure herself of  
the truth of her suspicions, let her watch in the  
woodland glade to-night at twelve, and she will  
see what she will see.”]

*Muriel.* There is no signature, no date. 'Tis  
strange !

“The truth of her suspicions !” Whence came  
this ?

*John.* My lady, not long since a gap-toothed hag,  
With squinting eye and yellow parchment skin,  
Came hobbling to the gate, and “John,” she cried,  
With munching mouth, as if a whole potato  
Stuck in her withered chops, “Here’s for your  
lady !”

And straight she’d gone ere I could ope my lips.  
Folks say she lives by Barnabee’s big oak,  
And is a witch of dread repute, for oft

When all the village, lady, 's fast asleep,  
 At night's noon-tide, when damnèd spirits walk,  
 And gates of hell disgorge their ghostly throng,  
 The passing traveller belated hears  
 Strange sounds like groans, weird cries, the hiss  
                   of snakes,

The screech-owl's call and laughter horrible,  
 Falling aghast upon the ears of night,  
 Succeeded by such searching silence deep  
 As freezes the heart's blood. I, too, have seen  
 Strange flickering lights that come and disappear  
 Around her cottage, and the dark cold stream  
 Which oozes from the spongy ground anear  
 Seemèd to me one night stained red like blood,  
 And I, no coward, then turned and fast fled.  
 May nought of ill from this ill visit hap,  
 My lady, for she's got the evil eye,  
 And her appearance bodeth good to none !

*Muriel.* Cease, thou long-winded foolish  
                   babbler, cease !

There are some men chatter more useless words  
 Than any garrulous old gossip dame.  
 The gabble of rustics for a thousand years  
 Would not amount to thine. O Superstition !  
 How strong thine armour is ! Lo, here this man,

Who's fronted death in many a fearful field,  
Yet at poor tale of puling witchcraft told  
Of some gaunt hag grown old with age and  
crime,

His cheek pales and straightway he conjures up  
Imagination's fearful fantasies,  
And deems them gospel truth.—Come, John,  
dismiss

These childish fancies and list well to me !  
Silent as death and secret as the grave  
Be thou in this. Ere chime of midnight fall  
Upon thy listening ear, we, unobserved,  
Masked well and cloaked, must to the woodland  
glade

To watch my cousin Courtland. Go, tell my  
father

I am not well and sup alone to-night,  
And then prepare all requisite disguise  
To baulk suspicion. Go !

*John.* My lady, I  
Live but to do thy bidding ; thou, a child  
When first I nursed thee, grown to womanhood  
Still hast my faithful service e'en in this  
Venture of dangerous quest.

*Muriel.* Is he away ?

Then can my heart this mask of seeming ease  
Put off and wear its sorrow undisguised ;  
For now Suspicion like some stealing mist  
Blots the fair brilliance of love's rising sun.  
"The truth of my suspicions!" Are they true ?  
I'll know of that to-night—that old beldame  
Hath earned her money well. To-night, to-night !  
A few short hours, and lo, the night is here,  
And then to know the truth that kills or saves !  
That ring he bought to give to her to-night  
For their betrothal if I do not err !  
For questioning his purpose, he betrayed .  
Confusion, made evasive short reply,  
Tricks of dissembling love, but I'll know all  
To-night, to-night ! I will know all to-night !  
Truth-telling Time, shall I to thee say stand !  
Steal backward, pause ! Upon thy dial-plate  
Arrest thy heavy hand, thy solemn voice  
Be ever hushed ere it proclaim this hour  
If that it bring fulfilment of my fear !  
Truth-telling Time, shall I say, Haste, be quick !  
Fly forward, hurry on your lagging hours  
If that they bring removal of my dread ?  
Oh ! I have loved him, but I grew too near  
His person to attract—and so he cares not.



For that same one that ever is so near,  
So servile to our wish, awkward through fear  
Of seeming foolish in the loved one's eyes,  
Clothes fairest love in such a fool's disguise,  
Watcheth so jealously on every look,  
Hangeth so angrily on every word,  
Scowleth so bitterly on every smile  
Given to another, that its presence veils  
The romance that a little distance lends  
Even to the dearest and best loved of friends ;  
Thus jealous love wearies what it would gain,  
Slaves like an idiot where it most should reign.  
Too much attentive tires, too anxious fails,  
For Love must be imaginative or die,  
Love ever young enraptured with a sigh !  
Therefore he loves me not—for me he cares not !  
Therein lies sorrow that no search of sun  
Through the wide confines of this woe-worn world  
Can mate in misery—for me he cares not !  
Yet once he said he loved me, but he lied.  
And oft in childhood's years, together playing,  
He'd take my hand, thus—and kissing my face,  
Call me his little wife. And now, fond fool !  
Th' intoxication of his love runs high,  
And fevers all his life—but not for me.

I have observed him lately ; yesterday  
 He called me pretty coz, but in such tone  
 Brothers to sisters use—I could have struck him !  
 And then, he's absent, his replies come slowly,  
 As if the rare machinery of his mind  
 Had other work to do. Some of his books  
 By chance opening I found all scribbled o'er  
 With name of Helen—that told me too well  
 All that I feared, yet, fearing, longed to know.  
 He loves this Helen, this rough Roundhead's girl,  
 This minion proud, with locks that darken night.  
 O ! what sees he in her that others lack ?  
 She's but a woman—no more than others be,  
 Yet is she more, since he doth take to her.  
 Oh, would to heaven that I were dark, not fair,  
 If that would win his love ! He fancies that  
 The angel of his dreams draws mortal breath  
 And walks this earth apparelled in the form  
 Of beauteous Helen. Thus he clothes her with  
 Imagination's rainbow-coloured hues,  
 And calls around her all the charms that rich  
 And pleasing Fancy from the mines of love  
 Gathers unspeakable. Men deem me fair,

[*Goes to the glass.*]

Term me the morn's blush rose, and proffer love,

But I care not since it is not *his* love.  
 Is not this golden hair as beautiful  
 As raven glossy locks? this mouth as tender  
 And soft to kiss as hers? the glances from  
 Blue eyes as thrilling and as sweet as black?  
 They are, and yet he loves me—loves me not!  
 For Love's not caught by colour of the hair,  
 Nor by kind glances from the brightest eye,  
 Nor by dear kisses of the daintiest mouth,  
 Nor by sweet music of mild-voiced maid;  
 For where Imagination fixes not  
 Her choice, all charms are vain, vain woman's  
     wiles,  
 The loveliest feature fails. Love, fancy-bred,  
 Seizes upon the form, and to the mind  
 Doth make it beauteous. The fairest maid,  
 Lacking love's light, seems not herself so fair  
 As plainer objects shone upon by love.  
 And dost thou deem, proud Helen, I'll submit  
 Thus to lose love, the very zest of life?  
 Love, too, can hate, and sooner see thee wed  
 My cousin, I'll—

*Enter* JOHN.

*John.*

My lady, all is done

As you commanded. At the postern gate  
We'll start ere twelve. Will you not rest awhile ?

*Muriel.* Can the stars rest upon their ceaseless  
round ?

Can the sea rest, that throbs upon the ground ?  
Or the mad mother when her babe is drowned ?  
Then I can rest as softly and as sound.

SCENE 3. SIR HARRY COURTLAND *alone in a  
forest glade. Time, about midnight.*

*Courtland.* The clouds have cleared, the frosty  
air bites keen,

The drowsy hours of night creep on but slow.  
High in mid-heaven the maiden moon now rides,  
And all the stars attendant shape their course  
Into the western sphere.—It is the hour,  
The hour she named with shy reluctant grace,  
And yet no signs proclaim her coming feet.  
O tedious time to those who love and wait,  
How swiftly speeding when those waiting meet,  
Meet but to part, for love is ever thus—  
Meetings, brief greetings, then a long, long blank !

What blanks have been to me, what days, what  
years,

Sick with expectance vain.—How clear comes  
back

That first fair vision of her, when, alone,  
I first beheld her in her father's house.

O sweet remembrance of a dear, dead day,  
Perfume of roses crushed ! Like night her hair

Adown her white and shapely shoulders fell  
In rich profusion, fair with many a curl

Twining to kiss and clasp her dainty waist,  
That every wanton wind that passed by  
Would pause with sweet caress to linger there.

Dark-browed, dark-eyed, yet of a tint as fair  
As ivory or the plumage of the swan.

And when she smiled, soothed by her beauty's  
balm,

The old earth brightened, and her wrinkled brow  
Smoothed its sharp lines of care, birds broke in  
song,

And life seemed good to live, each minute was  
A jewelled joy from heaven ; the jocund Day  
Led on the jolly Hours with echoing laugh,  
Yea, in her presence, Time itself stood still,  
And wished itself Eternity to be

24      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

Ever with her. Her dark brown, beauteous eyes  
The deep of heaven's midnight and restful calm  
Disclosed to view—haunt of all holy thought  
And high emprise. Dreams beyond fancy fair  
Dwell in those eyes, and at each gazer's feet  
Scatter the lovely fancies of a soul  
More meet for heaven than habitant of earth.  
But when her yielding eyes 'fore my rapt gaze  
Shyly down dropped, methought their question-  
ing gaze  
Sought something, for, unconscious, love looked  
out  
Of her wide-wondering eyes. Sweet was the  
glance  
She upward stole. As in a golden book  
Her inmost soul therein lay characterized.  
It was the soul of blessed angel bright,  
And my heart fluttered with a strange delight,  
Like that new joy that ushers souls just born,  
'Mid the hushed song of holy seraphim,  
To heaven's high ecstasy. I looked, I loved,  
And back returned love's message to her eyes.  
Two sparks of fire we kindled to one flame,  
Flashed like the lightning from encountering  
clouds ;

Two stars we met to make one beauteous world ;  
For each absorbèd each, as liquid globes  
Mix and commingle, sphere within a sphere,  
Rich with the other's fulness.—Thus came love,  
Love without which life hath no good to give,  
Sweet medicine of men, memory's strong balm,  
Pure pearl, that 'neath the ocean waves of life  
All grope for, but few find, whose blessed presence  
Doth make the beggar's rags hold happier heart  
Than prosperous purple's disguised poverty,  
Hiding an aching soul.—In woman's heart  
Oft is thy likeness seen, self unprefering,  
With a pure love they climb the heavenly stairs.  
And thus I loved her, and the days flew by  
Like arrows from a bow, but to our wooing  
Soon came an end, war's interruption wild ;  
Fierce civil war, that sets th' embittered son  
'Gainst his own father, friend against his friend,  
Brother 'gainst brother, joined in desperate strife.  
And I a cavalier, true to my King,  
Fought against her father, Cromwell's brother  
stern.

And now in this sad and disastrous time,  
Our King imprisoned and our cause near lost,  
And I in daily danger of my neck,

26      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

Find myself loving this same Roundhead's  
daughter

And stealing out to meet her here to-night.

Such is the wild audacity of love,

That reasons not where it may fix its choice.

Yet did but reason choose as wisely well,

Many in this sad world would happier thrive,

Led by love's law, not reason's musty choice.

Yea, love hath its own reasons, richer far

Than reason e'er could give, witness my Helen !

O happy name to grace so sweet a soul !

O blessed name, that was my mother's name,

Who ever gentle lived, kind, gracious, good,

A perfect lady. Would she were alive

To take my bashful Helen to her arms,

And kiss with smiles her doubting fears away.

Still comes she not, then moon, and thou fair  
hour

Of night, winds, woodlands, list my lady's praise !

[*Sings.*

SONG.

Yon moon that gazes on the earth

Finds nought so fair as she.

Look east, look west, look north, look south,





The dimples of her dainty mouth  
Can never equalled be,  
Can never equalled be.

O babbling brook that to the sea  
Bear'st many a pretty tale  
Of woman's love and constancy,  
Learn that henceforth thy theme shall be,  
Her charms that none assail,  
Her charms that none assail.

O wind that whisperest to the wood  
And wanderest everywhere,  
In many a land are maidens good,  
But beauty's only understood  
When she, my love, comes near,  
When she, my love, comes near.

Hark! 'tis her step, I will aside and hide,  
O sweet to hear unseen some words of love.

*Enter HELEN.*

*Helen.* This, by description that he gave to  
me,  
Should be the place at last. Yon great oak tree,  
That throws its old majestic head so high,

We were to meet at, but I see him not.  
 Harry, dear Harry, where art thou, sweetheart ?  
 Like to a tremulous deer that creeps away  
 Unperceived but yet fearing to be seen,  
 Raising its timid head at every sound,  
 Thus have I stolen from my father's house.  
 O, I have had a world of doubts and fears !  
 Straining mine ear to every passing sound  
 Which Fancy whispers to the busy brain,  
 Or Nature in her sleeping movements makes.  
 Each little falling leaf from off a tree  
 Down rustling to the ground, each little noise  
 Of snapping twigs in the thick underbrake,  
 Each restless sally of the hooting owl,  
 Yea, e'en the pulsing of my own heart's blood  
 Had cunning power to alarm my soul  
 In this lone wood dim lighted by the moon.  
 And now I'm here and Harry is not here.  
 Love should have quicker footsteps far than  
 thine !

[COURTLAND *steps from behind a tree.*

*Courtland.* Love should have quicker foot-  
 steps far than thine,  
 My lingering Helen, I have stayed so long  
 Methinks my whole life hath been planted here.

At every rustle of the leaves I said  
 "The wind's now telling them that Helen's near,"  
 And in a flutter of excitement they  
 Chattered and whispered, "Tell us, is it true  
 Helen's so very lovely? Are her eyes  
 More brightly beautiful, more calm and clear  
 Than stars at midnight in still waters seen  
 Gleaming, a mirrored wonder, whilst the moon  
 Looks round high heaven what loss she there  
     sustains,  
 What missing lights have wandered from their  
     spheres,  
 For sure earth borrowed of heaven to make  
     those eyes,  
 Those happy eyes serene with holy light,  
 Dearer than any dream's delicious joy.  
 Say you the tinkle of the shepherd's bell  
 Sounds inharmonious when her voice is heard?  
 Cannot the lily claim comparison,  
 Or come anear that snow-complexioned skin?  
 Why, you'll add next the Fairy Queen herself,  
 That loves to foot it in these woodlands wild,  
 Has stolen the pattern of her dainty shoe  
 From those two pearls her feet." Then thus I  
     heard,

30      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

Mute, listening still, fearing to interrupt,  
The wind reply, " A wanderer everywhere,  
East, west, north, south, in many a land I've  
seen

In many an age full many a lovely queen,  
But e'en that Helen old men did acclaim  
Worthy Troy's war waged all those weary years  
At price of kindred and so many tears  
Equals her not, but pales her beauty's fame  
As stars before the sun. Look, where she comes !  
And say mine is indeed no empty word ?  
Could that dark queen who died for Antony  
Show half such beauty to the wondering night ? "

*Helen.* Cease, pretty prattler. Lov'st thou me  
indeed,

Or thine imagination ? Ah, you men,  
Carried away by pleasing Fancy, paint  
A woman as she'd be, not as she is,  
And when the glamour of romance falls off,  
Offended she's not other than she is,  
You do as much her beauty underrate  
As first you overdid. O, Harry, Harry,  
Is there no virtue in a loving mind,  
That these fair outward shows take you so much ?  
Whose hue Dame Nature in her cunning skill



Stains with the colours of her golden art.  
Lo, the most glorious child of nature painted  
With all her pride, how soon the colours fade !  
Time dims the beauty of the brightest eye,  
And wrongs with wrinkles the most blushing  
cheek ;

Soon bendeth down the stately upright form,  
And lays on ebon locks its warning hand ;  
Changes too soon the dulcet notes of youth  
To peevish croon of cold, complaining age.  
Should love depend on passing gifts like  
these ?

*Courtland.* How soon must I reward thee with  
a kiss

For such ripe wisdom from those red young  
lips ?

But, sweet maid-moralist, did Nature make  
All beauteous things for us to note their loss,  
I prithee tell me, or to seize their hour  
And prime of life and use the joy of it ?  
The very sweetness of your growing youth,  
Your girlhood's beauty, budding womanhood,  
And careless grace of many a gentle charm  
Opening like some shy flower 'fore love's warm  
sun,

Thus changed me to that monstrous thing, a  
lover!

Poor weathercock, blown by all winds of love !  
Now ardent summer with its hot simoon,  
Now pensive autumn's melancholy breeze,  
Now blasts of winter, now most peevish spring,  
Whose winds capricious from four quarters blow,  
East, west, north, south, most like to woman's  
love.

Never at one fixed point, but veering ever,  
A woman's love sounds every tense of time.  
Yea, they are privileged patricians, men  
But poor plebeians in their service pressed.

*Helen.* Sir, you are mocking, and love should not mock.

*Courtland.* Whate'er I say, she'll say it is ill-said.

What'er I do, she'll say it is ill-done.  
 These are the charming, fond conceits of love,  
 The pretty contradictions of a girl  
 Pleased but yet pouting when you snatch a kiss  
 As I do now. [*Kisses her.*]

*Helen.* [*Striking him.*] Take that, and learn to know

**I am no school-girl to have my lips pressed.**

If the bold ventures of your lips have won  
Rude kisses from the lips of other girls,  
Practise this policy on them again.  
These flaunting cavaliers, upon my soul,  
Know not the tender sacredness of love.  
Sir, when you meet a lady in the wood,  
Did but you honour her with truthful love,  
Her would you reverence so much that she  
Would safer feel than in her father's house.  
For love that's true is also delicate,  
And love that's delicate's the honour due  
To trusting woman, and becomes her worth,  
The noblest tribute of a lover's praise,  
Which, like the sweet aroma of the rose,  
Invests her with a reverence more rare  
Than kingly crown or pearlèd diadem  
Did e'er extort. But if that wanting be,  
Then where unbridled license loosely reigns,  
Hot lust runs riot and respect must die,  
Which is the sap of love. O Harry, now  
Unbidden tears upstart into mine eyes,  
To think how I have thus misjudged your love,  
And placed it higher than your pedestal.  
Not for such love as this I loved you for,  
Not for such love out-stole I here to-night,

34      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

Not for such love gave I my virgin soul,  
And disobeyed my father for his foe—  
Again I say, not for such love as this.

*Courtland.* O Helen fair, in every mood  
divine!

When thou art calm the very peace of heaven  
Enters and fills the soul. When moved to wrath  
No fiery meteor plunging through the night  
Burns with such radiance rare. O, it is fine  
To see thee fret, fume, stamp thy pretty feet,  
And by the flash of thine indignant eye  
Look like some angry angel from the sky.  
I swear I love that spirit in thine eyes  
Which, like the sun, illumines more worlds than  
one.

But cease thine anger, pet, those pretty lips  
No longer pout with such insouciant grace,  
That he who looks on such sweet lips as thine,  
Though born a saint or an ascetic bred,  
Vowed like a monk to lonely fast and prayer,  
Cannot so master thought, restrain desire,  
But the temptation of a kiss will come  
And tempt him to the act. Then Love excuse  
me!

Place thyself in my place, thus plead for me,



Say to thy heart, dear one, "See, Harry comes!  
And thrice the moon hath paled her silver light,  
And thrice the moon hath filled her crescent  
horns

Since Harry came, and now that he is here  
Should I not be to him a little kind?  
Should I not grant to him a little grace,  
After so many dangers, toils, and cares?  
Say that he's sad, then will I comfort him,  
Bid him put on the merry spirit of love,  
And for a while forget the world in me.  
Hath he no friends? In me let him then find  
A thousand friends more suitable and dear.  
Is he dragged down by failing Fortune's cause,  
Whelmed in the pit of bitter, black despair?  
I will upraise him on the wings of love,  
And raise his soul to that pure height serene  
Where it shall look compassionate on the world  
And pity those who know not love like this.  
Yea! I'll be to him all things all at once,  
And what he lacks in me he still shall find.  
And should a kiss his weary spirit soothe,  
Surely the chariest maiden of our land  
Would yield her lips for such a tender plea."  
Thus Helen might have pleaded for her Harry,



I'll not leave thee nor deceive thee,  
Beauteous maiden of our land,  
Cast away these fears that grieve thee,  
Come, give me that little hand !

*[Takes a ring out of his pocket and places it  
on her hand. The OLD WITCH appears  
on the scene, muttering to herself the  
following lines :*

*Old Witch.*

Where the moon-beams fall serene,  
And the grass is stiffened white  
With the frozen sweat of night,  
Trace the circle on the green.

Thrice with measured step and pause,  
Taught by witch of Endor sweet,  
Thrice with muttered spell complete  
The green circle's magic laws.

When beneath a gloomy cloud  
Dian dims her silver light,  
Seek the secrets of the night,  
Call the spirit from its shroud.

*Helen.* Harry, I am afraid, she comes this way !

*Courtland.* I'll bind the cursèd witch and have her burnt.

*Helen.* Do nought to her, dear Harry—Harry, stay !

Or some great evil will upon thee rest.

*Courtland.* [*Steps forward.*] Avaunt, thou hellish hag, whose evil soul

And wicked presence in this peaceful scene

Pollutes the purity of virgin night.

Hence from our sight ! Away, or I will tie

Those broomstick arms and send thee to be burnt.

*Old Witch.* [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha ! good, hey, hey !

*Courtland.* What mean'st thou by Those cursèd chuckles from thy dewlap lips ?

*Old Witch.* Go home thyself and quick prepare for death !

Seest thou yon star in forehead of the Bull

That with its pale and sorry watery light

But scarce illumines the length of its own disc ?

I marked its course e'en from thy natal day,

And now the fatal time draws near apace.



*Courtland.* Cease, wretched hag ! or from thy  
mouth I'll tear

That lying tongue which speaks but to deceive.  
Dost thou not see how pale this lady is ?

*Old Witch.* She will look paler when the  
scaffold's reared,

She will look paler when the sound of wheels  
Borne by the wind strikes faintly on her ear,  
Telling her that the fatal cart moves on ;  
She will look paler when a shuddering " Ah !"  
Bursts from the crowd at the raised gleaming  
axe,

And one low moan proclaims Sir Harry Court-  
land

Dies for th' attempted murder of Cromwell.  
Ha, ha ! for twopence I shall buy thy head  
To boil it with newt's blood to make a spell  
To tell thy lady's fortune when thou'rt dead.

[*HELEN falls fainting to the ground, and as  
COURTLAND rushes towards her, the  
OLD WITCH disappears in the recesses  
of the forest.*

SCENE 4. *Another part of the Forest.* OLD  
WITCH and MURIEL *meeting.*

*Old Witch.* Marked you, saw, heard you all ?

*Muriel.* All, all, too well !

I could have lifted up my hand, and had I  
A dagger then, now were she dead indeed !

*Old Witch.* Marked you his kiss ?

*Muriel.* Make me not mad, old woman, there  
are things

We cannot suffer twice or the stretched heart-  
strings,

O'erstrained, would crack. Memory is merciful,

Else oft our memories would prove our death,

As even sometimes haps. What's suicide

But memory's agony, the contrast cruel

Between the bitter now, the blessed then,

And with such weight of sorrow bearing down

The cheerless present that the yawning gulf

Of death seems preferable. Woman, I tell thee,

That branding iron pressed to blistered flesh,

When in the pillory the prisoner stands,

Were rapture to this pain. It e'er burns here

To such heat that the raging conflagration,  
As Jealousy fast piles the fuel on,  
Would set fire to the world from flames so dire.

*Old Witch. [Aside.]* A monster passion! She'd  
strike sparks from stones,  
Yea, singe the fishes in the waters with it.  
I've moved her strongly—this will work more  
gold ;

For mark you, when some sin is to be done,  
Be it a murder, ravishment, or theft,  
The instrument that works the deed is gold.  
For who for nothing works another's work ?  
Feeling no passion, takes another's pain  
To prompt the deadly deed ? Having no spite  
Against the innocent, uplifts the knife  
For bloody murder, in another's cause  
Taking revenge ? Not so ! and therefore, gold  
Herein doth make the faint inducement great.

*Muriel.* O, beating heart, be still ! Break,  
break not yet,  
Throb not so wildly till thy work be done.  
I will be calm, I will be calmer now !  
But I will be most sure in my revenge—  
Sure and most cold, most calculating cold.  
He kissed her—once in happier days of yore

42      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT I.

His lips were not reluctant to seek mine,  
But she has become between me and my love,  
And she shall suffer what I suffer now.—  
Now John, let us begone ! The hour runs late.  
Old beldame, here is gold. More shalt thou  
have  
When more thou'st earned. Hearken ! to-  
morrow night  
I'll visit thee to plan a sure revenge,  
Keep a sealed mouth, remember ! Come John,  
come ! [Exeunt.



ACT II.

SCENE I. *A street near Whitehall. Evening.*

HERBERT *meeting* SIR HARRY COURTLAND.

*Herbert.* What makes thee thus so late? I  
nearly missed thee.

The chimes of Margaret have long struck six,  
And I was off, when through the dim-lit street  
I caught thy figure hurrying through the fog.  
What news? Thou'rt pale and thy hand trembles  
much!

*Courtland.* All's over . . . and the King—

*Herbert.* Is saved?

*Courtland.* Is lost!

Hark! yonder from Whitehall comes there no  
sound

Of hammering from the scaffold?—Hear'st thou  
nought?

Methinks the gallows should be building now.

*Herbert.* O horrible and heavy news! Did none

44      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

Make protest 'gainst such bloody, cruel conclusion ?

Tell me then how passed the last day's trial.

*Courtland.* Scarcely had I entered the judgment hall

When I beheld dark Bradshawe robed in red.

*Herbert.* A fitting colour for a deed of blood !

*Courtland.* On each side of the mock tribunal stood

Bodies of armed men. Then, at given signal,  
The gate of Westminster was opened wide,  
And as it on its ponderous hinges swung  
The thronging people, like a swarm of bees,  
One on the other packed, rushed in pell-mell  
Into all vacant space. The King then entered,  
Escorted by a guard of thirty-three,  
All officers, by Colonel Hacker led.

*Herbert.* How looked my lord the King ? was  
he much moved ?

*Courtland.* The King's eyes seemed most  
powerful and bright,

His features calm, yet not unmarked by care,  
And grief had scattered early snows upon  
The curls that clustered underneath his hat.  
As he advanced on toward the judgment bar,

Amid such silence the hushed world stood still,  
 With a most searching and severe regard  
 He eyed his judges ; then, with hat still on,  
 And with his wonted majesty of mien,  
 Seated himself, but shortly rose again  
 And looked around with a quick eye and gesture  
 As if to note each face in that vast crowd,  
 That out beyond, farther than sight could reach,  
 Filled every house, street, lane of Westminster,  
 Rank behind rank, edged in by armed men  
 Placed everywhere to still and overawe  
 The pitying people, anxious for their King.  
 Then one named Coke the accusation read,  
 And as he read these words,—“The King indicted  
 In name of the assembled Commons here,  
 And of all people of this English land,”  
 The King broke in and interrupting spoke.  
 But as, unheeding, Coke read on, the King  
 Stretched forth his cane and tapped him on the  
     arm,  
 When lo, the gold head of the cane fell off  
 And rolled upon the ground ! O awful portent !  
 I shuddered, and an icy shiver ran  
 Through all th’ assembly, and even the King  
 Seemed troubled, and bit nervously his lip.

46      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

But mark you, at each pause, at every stop,  
"God save your majesty! God save the King!"  
Resounded from all sides. With kicks and cuffs  
The brutal troopers strove to still the cry.  
When that unlooked-for interruption ceased,  
Among the very regicides themselves  
Came further stop, for when traitorous Bradshawe  
Proceeded to pass sentence on the King,  
One named Downes of those Roundheads stood  
up,

And with indignant eyes bedewed with tears,  
The passionate emotions of his soul  
Sweeping across his agitated face  
Like driven waves over some windswept sea,  
Boldly exclaimed, "O, have we hearts of stone,  
O, are we men?" Then, whilst two members  
tried

To hold him down, one muttered in his ear,  
"You fool! you'll ruin us and yourself too!"  
"Were I to die for it, no care," he said.  
Then Cromwell, his red face purpling with rage,  
Turned round upon him suddenly and growled,  
"Downes, are you mad? can't you sit still?"  
and he

Said, "No! I cannot and will not sit still."

Then, rising nobly, like a brave man true,  
Declared his conscience him would not permit  
Thus to refuse the King's request. "I move  
That we adjourn for to deliberate."

Bradshawe complied, fearing such sad remorse  
Might change more hearts of that false forty-  
nine.

For one half-hour that dark conclave withdrew.  
Judge then what anxious thoughts thrilled every  
mind.

Thrice from my brow wiped I the gathering  
sweat,

Thrice with my tongue moistened my glued,  
parched lips.

We stood like those listening within a dream  
For the first sounds of some imagined tread,  
Some fancied murderer creeping to our bed.  
At length they come.—The savage troopers yell  
"Justice! True justice! Execution! Death!"  
And mingled with the din I also heard  
The pitying people praying for their King.  
"God save his majesty! God save the King  
From all his enemies!" Thus, in the midst  
Of this wild tumult, sentence was pronounced.  
And then ensued a scene I blush to tell,

48      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

The King protesting vainly, forced away,  
By the surrounding soldiers dragged along.  
Some blew tobacco smoke into his face,  
Some spat on him, some yelled within his ear,  
Some smote him roughly with their cruel hands.  
O, where was Pity—fled from hearts of men?  
Had they no fathers? Loved they not their  
                  sons?

Because a man's a king must he die twice?  
The buffetings of this most brutal mob  
Was bitterness of death more hard to bear  
Than the black block, scaffold, and gleaming axe.  
One soldier echoing the people's cry,  
His savage leader felled him to the ground.  
"Poor fellow!" said the King, "a heavy blow  
For such a light offence!" Then, as he heard  
The hired hootings of the soldier mob,  
"Poor souls! for sixpence they would say the  
                  same

To their own generals," he pityingly said.  
And as cruel Axtell followed the King's chair,  
The loyal people called to him and said:  
"What then, dost thou have our good King con-  
                  veyed  
In hired chair, like one that hath the plague?

God save him out of all such hands as thine !”

*Herbert.* The people’s heart was ever leal and true.

They wish not the King’s death, but Cromwell’s crowd

Of savage soldiers overawe this land,  
And with him at their head respect no law,  
And with this mockery of a parliament,  
Dwindled to one half-quarter by his means,  
Sifted to suit their ends, murder the King,  
Against a nation’s will by soldiers slain.

*Courtland.* Unto Whitehall then followed I the King.

He spake these last words as he entered in :  
“ All that those who yet love me still can do  
Is to pray for me, for my time is short.”  
Then hasted I to find thee waiting here.  
But we must separate—this open place  
Doth court espial, but we meet again  
In the Old Bailey, at “ Sign of the Ship.”  
Cromwell must die—there will I tell thee how—  
Shall our king perish and that traitor live ?

[*Exeunt.*





Of what we are, whence came we, what shall be,  
 If be at all? Ah, no! This glad green earth  
 Can counterbalance with a thousand charms  
 Such wintry view of life—as if no summer  
 E'er came to court man with its laughing joys.  
 You view all things through death's dark spec-  
 tacles.

The very conceit of the soul is this,  
 That earth should spin not when a man is dead,  
 And the black pall that over him shall lie  
 Darken the universe. Audacious plea!  
 Claiming in nature such a god-like place!  
 And yet this deep assertion of the soul,  
 This mighty protest of her conscious worth,  
 This scorn of Place and Time to pen her in,  
 Points to her high original, implies  
 Life beyond death and God beyond the grave.

*King.* And He, my friend, being so majestic,  
 Therefore we may much from His justice hope,  
 Much from His wisdom, yet more from His love.  
 But I mistake, in this poor world alone  
 Justice and love are put so far apart  
 That we forget they are but one in Him.  
 For perfect love is perfect justice too;  
 Yea, justice is not justice without love.

52      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

But in the name of justice here below  
Such deeds are done, angels turn pale to see.  
'Tis "justice" robs me of my people's love,  
And in the name of "justice" they rebel,  
And pluck the crown from off this aching brow,  
And cast me here in prison rude and bare,  
And try me with the mockery of a court—  
I, Charles the King, son of a king, and proud,  
Taught to believe myself some god-like one,  
Must face the rude looks of the rabble crowd  
Dressed in their Sunday-holiday attire  
Waiting to see me die. Then Justice lastly  
Holds up this reeking head and calls aloud,  
"Behold a traitor's head ! thus perish all  
Great England's enemies." O dear my land !  
My country, hast thou not been harsh to me,  
Thy hapless king ? Death's but the due of all,  
But this brings double bitterness to death.  
A traitor to my country !—erring, weak,  
God knows my faults, but never consciously  
A traitor in thought, act, I, Charles the King !

*Herbert.* My lord, do not affect thy soul so  
much.

England shall know thee yet, her children's  
children

Rise up and call thee by a martyr's name ;  
And e'en the sternest of thy country's judges  
Shall not approve so cruel a deed as this,  
Whose dark shame blots the white of history's  
page.

*King.* Say, what is death? Canst thou imagine  
death,

Herbert, or realise what 'tis to die ?  
I, strong, sound, whole, in every living limb,  
The lusty blood fresh flowing through these veins,  
The mind so busily pursuing plans  
As if unconscious that this workmanship  
Is to be shattered at a single blow,  
And this rare work of nature's cunning skill  
All in one stroke to be resolved to nought.  
This is a thing hard to be realized  
At death of others, much more of one's own.  
And I shall be no longer seen or heard,  
A breath, a bubble on the stream of life,  
Then gone, burst, disappeared, dead with the  
dead !

Yet still life's stream flows on—who misses one  
Out of the many myriads of mankind ?  
Seasons as sweet will come, and go and come,  
Roses as beauteous bloom when I am dead ;

54      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

The moon still rise on the red ripened corn,  
And wandering autumn winds as gently sway  
The love-locks of brown Phyllis, and her swain  
As blithely sing his carols to her eyes,  
And the old world as merrily wag on,  
Revolving night and day, unconscious all  
That some poor soul hath ta'en its leave of life ;  
Yea, men will marry and beget fair children,  
And hear the merry voices of their sons  
And the low laughter of young girls around  
The fire seated on a winter's night  
When all the house is comfortably shut.  
And this will come, but never come to me !  
There must be something sweeter after death  
Some recompense of ampler, nobler being,  
That will not break the unity of life,  
That will not make us strangers to ourselves,  
Nor foreign to the faces of our friends,  
But will attach us to the past so much  
That all the present of that after life  
Will seem the natural growth, outcome of this.  
For were there not a sweeter after life,  
With ample recompense of nobler being  
With sweet-joined memory unto the past,  
We could not solve the riddle of this life.

For would men live to be thus plagued below  
If life were meaningless and death end all?  
For a few short und miserable years,  
Cozened by shows of time, the fools of fate,  
To drag their heavy fetters till the grave,  
Man's melancholy portion closed them in,  
Couching the dead upon cold clods of clay,  
Food for the worm their final end and aim!  
And rather not at once dismissal take  
From this delirious dream where things that are  
not,  
And airy nothings, ape existence real,  
Wearied of wandering in a world of gloom  
And formless phantasms?  
Why would men marry and beget fair children,  
As generations long have lived to do,  
Why love their wives, their little ones, their  
friends,  
With fond affection, when in a moment's time,  
Like to autumnal leaves, all pass away  
Out of existence, and no shred is left  
Of that they hoped for. Then love, whence  
comes cruel pain  
By bitter parting's, but the cunning plan  
Of some more potent Being than ourselves,

Who for his sport makes pastime of men's lives,  
 All creatures his blind instruments to live.  
 A cruel and wicked Will that takes not counsel  
 Of Wisdom, Pity, is deterred by no  
 Ruin or misery or another's pain ;  
 Thus all the brighter aspects of our life  
 Are but delusions in his service pressed,  
 Who with blind impulse ever presses on  
 To pass to richer forms of concrete life,  
 A wicked Will to live, not Will to love.  
 But if the basis of all being is Will,  
 Can that Creator who gave life to man,  
 Gifted with conscience, love, and reason's ray,  
 Be so inferior to His works ? I trow not !  
 And since the hope of happier life to come  
 Hath helped so many nations, men, to live,  
 Let us conclude, howe'er mysterious  
 This life of man on earth will ever be,  
 The outcome good not evil, that hope just,  
 That that Intelligence who "shapes our ends,"  
 Gave life to man for higher being than this,  
 Gave love, gave hope, not to frustrated be.

*Herbert.* O dear my king, how thy words  
                         cheer my heart !  
 For when to-morrow thy loved smile is stilled,

Thy well-known voice so hushed that nevermore  
 Thy friend shall hear it on this earth again,  
 What could be worse than to think all were o'er ?  
 What, never look on thy dear face again,  
 Nor smile respond to thy soft smiling eyes !  
 Never again the loved hand of one's friend  
 To grasp in friendly clasp, never again  
 To hear the sound of that familiar voice ?  
 In all that after life to live unknown,  
 To thee for ever lost—why then in heaven  
 Despair would reign where love should only dwell,  
 O, this were laughable were't not so sad,  
 Yea, e'en to glance at a soul-shuddering thought,  
 A thought of folly beyond reason bred—  
 The hideous hint and sad surmise, which Death  
 With leering mockery affronts the soul.

*King.* Was I but yesterday a king, and seated  
 Upon a throne, served by my subjects all ?  
 But yesterday a king, and must to-morrow  
 This head be torn off from its bleeding trunk ?  
 O strange mutations of our fickle state !  
 What hideous dream is this ? Say, do I sleep ?  
 Come, clasp me by the hand, that I may feel  
 I'm in the body, and this sentient life  
 Not yet escaped. Is death then only this,

58      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

The prisoner's freedom from the bonds of sense?

*Herbert.* There lies the complex question!

There, my lord,

You touch the marge and boundary of being,

Life! . . .

Who understands it? Who has seen it? Who?

'Tis like the goddess Isis' fabled veil

That ne'er by mortal hand may lifted be.

Is it the deepest of delusions, or

No mockery, but the sanctioned high ordeal

And trial of man called to a great career,

The soul's knighthood by path of progress gained

And prelude to that glory which shall be?

For Nature's aspiration up to man

Reaches, but man's to God.

Thus in this earthly tournament called life,

Strange jousts are played and issues manifold

Wait on th' event. 'Twixt cradle and the grave

For man no rest is found. His state is ever

A state of conflict. There his glory lies

And there his danger too. But here, my lord,

I'm known unto myself, the world, and thee

By these same bonds of sense, and, this being so,

The body bearing witness to the "I,"

The revelation of a personal life



Therefore without some body how made known ?

*King.* My friend, there are some who as-  
severate,

And with much ground, methinks, of reasoned  
truth,

That when the soul this house of time vacates

And the frail earthly garment of the flesh

Disrobes, itself with other raiment fair

Endues, and must eternally assume

Some bodied form to syllable its being,

Or like a wave of the insensate sea

Man's life froths up a moment, then falls back,

Whelmed in the vast unconscious ocean's whole.

*Herbert.* Is this not contrary to the word of  
God,

Would Father Peters not call it unsound ?

*King.* How each one seeks to bind God by  
his creed,

And with a twisted rope of words would measure

The One immeasurable and Him confine

To the monotonous groove of his idea.

Some are there that would deem no sinner saved,

If in the plan prescribed for his acceptance,

If in the formal doctrine of the schools,

One letter of the alphabet were lost,

60      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

One point of punctuation missed, left out.

*Herbert.* Man's days are hedged with mystery,  
and this life,

This little life of man, is mystery too.

'Tis like the murmur of some lonely sea

Whispering at night upon an unknown shore.

*King.* Yes, there is that within the life of  
man

Thought cannot fathom, but the soul divines,

Rather than knows, the path of progress ends

In beauty, higher service, heavenly life.

Thus through the vast and black abyss of death

In the dim distance shines one lovely star

Upon our night of doubt, the star of Hope,

Hope of a happier, better state to come.

This the whole world's consentient conscience  
owns,

And therefore to this personal life of man

Is lent some part of that high divine Will

Which freely man directs either to use

In service of his selfish will to live,

Even at cost of other creatures' pain,

Or service of the divine will to love,

Whose progress therefore ends not with the  
grave.

*Enter Jailor.*

*Jailor.* Your Majesty, the Council have decreed

You once again shall be allowed to see  
Your children ere you die—they have been sent  
for,

And now are on the way to meet you here.

*King.* Then, O my soul, summon thy fortitude,

Or tears will make a fountain of these eyes!  
It seems but yesterday that they were born,  
And my sweet wife, Herbert, was by my side,  
Who smiling back from them to me thus said,  
“They shall grow up beneath our fostering care.”  
But now a father’s care shall they not know.  
O Herbert! ’tis a blessed thing to live  
To see one’s children growing up to be  
Good men and women, and their children’s children

Prattling around their great-grandfather’s knee,  
Till he, like a ripe fruit that has stood long,  
Drops gently on the breast of mother earth,  
Or, like the sun of a long summer’s day,  
Sinks slowly and with peace into the grave.

*Enter* BISHOP JUXON.

*Bishop.* O, dear my King! O, my revered,  
loved King!

[*Wipes the tears from his eyes.*]

*King.* My lord, compose yourself. We have  
no time

To waste on grief, now let us rather think  
Of the great matter. Friend, I must prepare  
For the great change, to render my account.  
I trust to meet death calmly and in peace,  
Assisted by your Grace—but of these men  
Into whose hands I've fallen, we will not  
Make mention of. If they thirst for my blood,  
Let them have it—God's will be done, I say.

SCENE 3. *Enter the KING'S Children, escorted  
by the Jailor.*

*Gloucester.* Why, father, have you been away  
so long?

It went all wrong without you. Father, why  
Is sister crying so?

*Elizabeth.* O father dear!

*King.* God bless you, my sweet children, let  
me feel

Your pretty lips embrace me once again.  
I have not seen you for a long, long time,  
And soon I shall not see you any more,  
For I am going on a far, far journey!

*Gloucester.* Dear father, take me with you.  
I've been good!

Ask sister Lizzie if I've not been good.

[*KING, taking GLOUCESTER on his knee.*

*King.* This is a journey all must go alone.  
Sweetheart, now they'll cut off thy father's head.  
Heed, my child, what I say—they will cut off  
Thy father's head and may make thee a king.  
But mark, I say, you must not be a king  
Whilst Charles and James your brothers are  
alive.

Therefore I charge thee be not made a king  
By them.

*Gloucester.* [*Sighing deeply.*] No, I'll be torn in  
pieces first.

*King.* That's my dear son, my noble little  
boy.

O, what a precious spirit must I leave

64      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

To the harsh mercies of a cold, rough world !

[*Turns to his daughter.*

And now, dear little daughter, I am glad  
That you are here, for, though I have not time  
To speak much yet, somewhat I wished to say  
I could not to another, and I feared  
They would not have permitted me to write.  
But, sweetheart, you'll forget what you now  
hear ?

*Elisabeth.* Father, I'll try and write down every  
word.

*King.* Then list to me, my pet, for the last time.  
First, I'd not have you fret your gentle heart,  
Or grieve too much for me when I am gone.  
For is not this a noble death to die  
For any man, who, in an upright cause,  
Dares to uphold the right against the wrong,  
And though o'erwhelmed by thousands, yet  
yields not  
The bright jewel of his perfect constancy,  
But as he lived with honour so will die.  
My enemies I have forgiven all.  
And, sweetheart, say that I commanded you  
To tell your brothers, sisters, to forgive.  
Above all to your mother say, dear child,

I only grieve to go where she is not.  
 I that fly out into the dark unknown,  
 Like some poor bird wind-shaken from its  
     nest,  
 Feel that love solves the mystery cold of death.  
 Ah! wandering thoughts, ah, whither would you  
     take me?

*[Draws off his ring from his finger.]*

Give this ring to your mother, my sweet child.  
 In after years, when I am dead and gone,  
 It may recall some memories of fair hours,  
 Some happier days of our young wedded lives.  
 Then memory of my love shall consecrate  
 This symbol with a reverence not its own,  
 And grief grow milder as it gazes on  
 The husband's ring which once a happy bride  
 Shyly placed blushing on her true love's hand.  
 And now, dear little daughter, fare you well!  
 Comfort your mother, children, with your  
     loves,  
 And be obedient, for she's ever been  
 A good mother to you. Perhaps 'tis best  
 I go away, for God may yet restore  
 The crown unto my son, and then you'd all  
 Far happier be than had I lived, methinks.

66      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT II.

*Elisabeth.* O father, we'll never be happy  
more !

*King.* My daughter, thou art young, and life  
is sweet,

And sorrow to thee but an April's shower,  
For when the sun comes out youth's tears are  
dried,

And this is as it should be. I love not  
To see a brooding sadness on the brow  
That should be clothed with rosy smiles of  
youth.

'Tis a poor fancy-forced disease of mind,  
Argues a sick and pallid appetite,  
When youth finds pleasure in the food of  
grief,

And morbidly with proud intolerance deems  
It hugs a sorrow that the world knows not.  
O my dear little ones, to me now lost,  
Be happy while you can ! Serve God, your  
country,

And may he bless you. Come, kiss once again !

[*Embraces them.*

Here, my Lord Juxon, now lead them away !

[*KING stands near the window overcome  
with grief.*



SC. 3.] ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. 67

Oh my dear children! O loved little ones!

*[As he sees them passing through the door,  
he rushes forward, snatches them to his  
breast and covers them with kisses.]*

O thou All-seeing One, protect and shield  
Their harmless lives from hate of enemies.

*[Kneels and prays.]*

### ACT III.

SCENE I. *Whitehall. One of the apartments of the palace. The dead king lying in his coffin. A light burning. Time, midnight. Enter CROMWELL.*

*Cromwell.* And so 'tis done!  
Ready equipped the horses stand in stall,  
The thousand posts of England long delayed  
By morning's sun shall bruit the news abroad,  
By sound of trumpet and by beat of drum  
Announcing death to every traitor soul  
That dares a second Stuart king proclaim.  
*[Approaches the coffin.]*

This is the chamber of the quiet dead.  
And he who 'neath yon coffin-lid lies low,  
Lies there so still who lately lived so much  
Was England's . . . But let future ages judge  
'Twixt Cromwell and this dead discrowned king.  
Their calm impartial eyes more purely weigh,  
Their conscience untied to a party's cause.

We are too coloured with the dust of strife,  
Too deeply plunged into the sucking sands  
Of danger freely to judge this event.

*[Raises the coffin lid.]*

Peace! poor pale face! Is this the man who  
late

Shook England to the depths of her great soul  
And roused the sleeping lion of our land  
To guard the treasured charters of our race?

"It is a deeply solemn thing to die!

It is a deeply solemn thing to kill

A man in image of His Maker made."

Charles Stuart, I have met thee in the camp,

On battle field, at council, judgment bar,

And now I meet thee here thus lying low,

Thy sorrows ended and our warfare stilled.

The storm of life that beat so fiercely on thee,

Succeeded by a calm so lasting deep

That not the presence of thine enemy

Can bring a blush into thy faded cheek,

Is as unmarked as though a fly might light

One moment on thy face, then buzz away.

O God! I have not toiled for people's praise,

I have not served the cause for selfish ends,

And looking here upon thy passive face,

70    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

And fast-closed eyes, whose drooping lids shall  
never

Again uncover to the light of day,  
I say, Charles Stuart, I did thee no wrong.  
My God, my country, and my conscience, called,  
"Who will go for us," and then answered "I."  
Yet foul Suspicion, like some withered hag,  
Points with her bony finger to the throne,  
And claps her hands with devilish glee and  
jeers ;

Her horrid laugh filling the public mind  
With apprehension of disguised deceits,  
So taking probable, so seeming just,  
That many an honest man will sigh for me,  
And misconception crown me in the tomb.  
What matter ? Looks Cromwell for base re-  
ward ?

A work of love requires no paymaster.  
What's freely given is above all price.  
And say, poor king, was then the crown by thee  
So softly, gently, comfortably worn  
That its bright band of gold burnt not thy brow ?  
It pressed so heavily upon thine head  
It bent it to the block and gleaming axe.  
Is it for *this* men say, "Cromwell's ambitious ?"

Is it for *this* he strives and toils alway,  
And under grave pretence of public good  
Designs some great advancement for himself,  
Charmed with this care-creating crown of gold,  
Whose lustre leads the soul confused to death?  
“O I would rather keep a flock of sheep  
Than govern men! Yet, God my witness be  
I called not myself unto this place—  
Again I say, I called not myself.  
But if a duty be incumbent, then  
I am necessitated thereunto,  
Nor can I quit the power that God hath put  
Into my hands until by Him so bid.”  
And say that I accept this perilous place,  
The post of honour, and perchance of death,  
What if some small dogs bark and sniff the  
wind,  
Scenting suspiciously my onward track  
For odour of vile schemes and deep designs?  
I placèd here by right from God and man,  
Am I not then as much accredited?  
May I not balance this same providence?  
May not this stamp of God’s commission bear  
An equal poise with any interest  
Inherited or right divine of kings?

72    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS.    [ACT III.]

Then, if my calling be from God and all  
The people to it testimony bear,  
God and the people it from me shall take  
Ere I will part with it.    Soft ! who goes there ?

[COURTLAND *disguised as a soldier.*

*Courtland.* One of the sentinels on guard, my  
lord !

What government shall be now that he's dead ?

*Cromwell.* [*Turning to the coffin.*] The same  
there was.    See, this Charles Stuart  
Had a sound body, seeming strong, well made,  
Fitted for a long life.

*Courtland.*                    And brave was he  
In battle, at the last great fight of all  
Looked every inch a king, that we, rough  
soldiers,  
Felt that just reverence that a soldier feels  
When a brave man dies well.    Ah ! noble king !  
Never beheld I face more moving sad ;  
It touched the hardest hearts.    Those mournful  
eyes

Gazed round with such a deprecative grace,  
As if to plead some pity from his foes,  
As if imploring of all tender hearts  
Some gentle prayer to speed him on his way.

It pained my heart till I dare look no more.  
 He ne'er beheld his children, sir, that day,  
 It would have been too much ; and they, poor  
     things,

Wondering and weeping why he came no more,  
 Sat sadly waiting—at each turn o' the latch  
 Raising their childish eyes half-dimmed with  
     tears,

Started as if t' embrace him once again,  
 And cried out "Father," but the word outdied  
 Upon their lips, stifled with sobs and sighs.  
 Poor hapless innocents ! their sun no more  
 Shall dry away their tears.

*Cromwell.*                      Enough, my man,  
 More than enough of this. Must sentiment  
 Make cowards of us in a rightful cause ?  
 Compassion is a noble thing, I own,  
 But if compassion kills the public good  
 And makes the toiling sons of England slaves  
 To the base purposes of one weak man,  
 Then 'tis a noble virtue much misplaced,  
 The sentimental folly of the fool,  
 Or drivelling drunkard's pity, whose soft tears  
 Flow charmed at his own sensibility.  
 A Nero weeping at a mournful tale

74      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

Told by some master of the art divine,  
Yet strumming on his harp whilst mighty  
Rome

Lifts up her burning forehead to the skies  
In agony of those perfidious flames.  
Let us beware of sentiment misplaced.  
Roundheads must not be silly Royalists,  
Who fight for sentiment more than their king.  
Yea, had your hand been tender as your heart,  
And if as yours our hearts as tender, too,  
England had inly mourned in bondage still,  
And you and I and many a mother's son  
Left headless, rotting on yon battlements.  
Think of my words. Now, go, summon the  
guard!

*Courtland.* Think of your words!  
I have thought of them, yea, will work them  
out!

"Had my hand been as tender as my heart."  
It is as tender, Cromwell; therefore I  
Denounce thee here, before this murdered man,  
Meek martyred saint, England's most glorious  
king,  
Do tell thee thou hast done so foul a wrong  
As cannot be repaired nor yet o'erlooked,



And as my hand's as tender as my heart,  
Die!

*[Stabs him in the chest, but the dagger's blade  
is turned aside by the armour beneath  
CROMWELL'S coat.*

*Cromwell.* A Cavalier disguised! Ho, guards  
without!

*[Whistles. Guards rush in and seize COURT-  
LAND.*

*Cromwell.* Take him away! This Royalist  
disguised,

Seized in the very act, deserves quick death.

Yet that with justice still all may be done,

Find out his name and place, then be he tried

By a just jury of his countrymen.

Surely to me God's mercies are untold,

Surely salvation unto them is nigh

That fear him. Comrades, let us sing that psalm.

*[All go out chanting.*

"Kings with their armies then did flee apace."

SCENE 2. *Hampton Court. The day after the execution of the KING. CROMWELL alone, writing. Enter HELEN, who throws herself at CROMWELL'S feet.*

*Helen.* My worthy uncle, hear me! Uncle,  
hear me!

*Cromwell.* Why, what is this? Come, rise from  
off thy knees!

Thy face so pale, the hot tears in thine eyes,  
Which look with weeping red, and thy mouth,  
child,

Quivering with sobs suppressed; thy little  
hand

Trembling like aspen shaken in the wind.

*Helen.* O spare him, uncle! Spare him! Spare  
his life!

*Cromwell.* Is the child mad? What him?  
What life?

*Helen.* He who I love above all earthly things,  
Sir Harry Courtland.

*Cromwell.* [*Rising up in anger.*] And dost thou,  
traitress,

Dost dare to tell me this? Thou, Cromwell's  
niece!

One of our race—O shameless, past belief!  
To wish to wed with this Philistine dog,  
The enemy of our most righteous cause,  
This man rejected by his God, this papist,  
Who lies e'en now 'neath sentence of sharp death.  
*Thou!* brought up in the congregation of  
The faithful, who the covenant of grace  
Hast tasted, thus to fall, unhappy girl!  
So fairly pencilled by kind Nature's hand.  
Unhappy uncle! Such a girl, so graced!  
It cuts me to the heart, indeed it does!  
But hark ye, minion! Sooner would I see thee  
Dead at my feet than this malignant's bride.  
Yea, he shall die before another sun.

*Helen.* Sir, I did come to plead for him some  
grace,

Hoping perchance thou wouldst prove pitiful.  
But I perceive thou art most hard of heart.  
I am but a poor weak maiden, as you see,  
Therefore, not skilled in moving arguments  
To turn men from their purpose with charmed  
words.

Love is the only rhetoric I know,

It prompts the only pleading that I bring.  
 Sir, Nature works in woman as in man,  
 And she'll not be gainsaid. The wind, it cometh  
 And bloweth where it will—so cometh love,  
 That settles not within the prescribed course  
 Of man's own choosing, laughs to scorn his rules  
 Of rigid custom and pedantic law,  
 And wanders where it will. Is this a sin, then,  
 When Nature cries, "Go, heart, out to another,"  
 That heart goes out and cleaves unto that one  
 Fast as a limpet to its own rock's home,  
 Though washed by many a wave? If, therefore,  
       this

You call a sin, God made it so, I wis!

*Cromwell.* By these same arguments a maiden  
       might

A murderer love, and thus excuse the shame.

*Helen.* Call him malignant, murderer, what  
       you will,

Philistine dog, a perjured papist hound,  
 Hurl at him your harsh scriptures, "Hip and  
       thigh

To smite the Ammonite," I only know  
 I love him, and he's worthy to be loved.  
 Worthy all Nature in me whispers, but

Thou in the darkness of thine ignorance thinkest  
 A maid can set her pure affection on  
 A man debased, of vile and murderous mind.  
 Sir, you're most ignorant, there are intuitions  
 Deep, secret, felt, but not to be described,  
 With which kind Nature arms pure virgin souls,  
 That they, like plants, most sensitive rare plants,  
 By instinct shrink and shun the rude approach  
 Of any foul-souled thing—this our love guard.  
 So, when a woman, a pure woman, yields up  
 Her first shy blushing love, mark you the man !  
 And though the world may call him base and  
 bad,

Believe not idle rumour's spite, he hath  
 Some hidden good of which men wot not of.

*Cromwell.* He tried to murder me. Call you  
 that good ?

*Helen.* I grieve for that wild deed. There he  
 did err ;

But with no base and common murderer's mind.  
 Believe me in this thing, uncle, believe me !  
 For borne away with grief for his loved king,  
 The Jesuits used him for their instrument.  
 He, young, rash, generous, and full of zeal  
 For what he deemed a righteous, holy cause,

80    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

Plunged at the bait they dangled 'fore his eyes,  
And like a silly fish was straightway ta'en.  
High seated like a king, wide-wandering fame  
Hath found thee, Cromwell; may it find thee kind.

*Cromwell.* She moves me verily, I feel my  
heart

Fast yielding to the pressure of her words.  
A woman of most expert flattery,  
Her maiden pitying eyes, pleading for him,  
Would call tears down from heaven, make angels  
weep.

Such weight of sorrow on her spirit lies  
As quite breaks down shy maiden's nicety.

*Helen.* Uncle, thy words are full of grace and  
tender ;

I may hope much therefrom !

*Cromwell.* Child, I forgot me—

A moment's weakness born of woman's tears,  
But pity must not lead me from the path  
Of my sworn duty. Woman, were it my son  
I could not pardon him. I have no power.  
Taken in arms against the Government  
In most dishonourable attempt against  
My person and our cause. Yet that somewhat  
My heart doth pity thine unhappy love—

Alas, that thou hast centered it in him !—  
 What chance of hope that I to thee can give  
 That will I give, and justice yet be done.  
 To-morrow at the first sight of the sun  
 Three prisoners are to die, he, and two more.  
 Though all well merit death, yet only one  
 Of those misguided men shall die. To two  
 We pardon will extend. Let them decide  
 By lot, who lives, who dies, but, if averse  
 Are they to draw the dread decree of fate,  
 A child shall act for them. Upon two lots,  
 The third one being a blank, this shall be writ,  
 "Life given by God," and he who draws such  
     lives,  
 To whom the blank falls, dies. God's finger thus  
 Plainly points out his providence and will.

*Helen.* I thank thee not for this, hard-hearted  
     man,  
 Thou stern, harsh Hebrew, cold to Christian love !  
 The Testament of our kind Master shows  
 Pity and love and pardon for us all.  
 To gamble thus with life, to qualify  
 The gift of mercy, is no mercy, but  
 The kindness of a cruel beast of prey  
 That paws its victim playfully ere it kills.

82    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

*Cromwell.* Enough! affairs of state wait my regard,

We waste time thus in woman's arguments.

I've said what I have said, what comfort take

Thou canst therefrom. Go now! Ho! Who  
waits there?                    [*Attendant appears.*

Call in the secret messenger from France

And lead this lady forth.

*Helen.*

Will nothing move thee,

Hard and relentless man? Those icicles

That drip from yonder eaves less cold than thou,

For they do melt at the sun's softening ray,

But thou thaw'st not at pity's pleading tale.

O harsh of heart and crueller than the wind

That from the east cuts through the shivering flesh,

Thou gloatest in man's blood and call'st it justice.

[*Goes out.*

SCENE 3. *Sir HARRY COURTLAND alone in  
prison. Night.*

*Courtland.* Twelve by the clock—I shall not  
live to hear

Another twelve strike from yon belfry old!

How cold it is! I shiver! through the bars



Frost-glittering, white, the pale moon sadly peeps  
As though to take her last farewell of me.  
Great London, now watched by the sentry stars,  
With all her myriads sleeps. The drowsy cry  
Of the far watchman dies upon the night  
Telling the pass of time. O God ! how quickly  
Our little length of life runs to an end !  
What trifling accidents can dispossess us  
Of this frail mortal garment of the soul !  
A fly may choke us, yea, a pin's point end us !  
A hundred thousand doors lie ready ope  
To death—but one to life. Is this in kindness  
That Nature thus devises many ways  
Of cunning deaths to end the life of man ?  
Some by the surges of the yeasty sea  
Sink to oblivion fast. By lightning some  
Burnt to black coal at once. Some in dark mines  
Choked by unwholesome gas. By some an earth-  
quake—  
That yawns and gulps a busy city fair  
Ere one can say 'tis gone ! Or a volcano  
Spurts its hot ashes in th' affrighted air,  
And veils with darkness thick the doomèd town  
In one long night which deepens into death.  
Or the black plague emits its stinking breath

84    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

So that whole peoples perish, and the grass  
Grows rankly in the lone, untrodden streets.  
Though this were all too little, as a sad  
And bitter irony on man's fleeting state,  
Against his brother man lifts up his hand  
To take God-given life. Heavy's my mind.  
Alas, I do repent me that I raised  
My hand in secret against Cromwell's life.  
Those Jesuit priests turned to their own planned  
    ends  
My love-zeal for the king, my hate of Cromwell.  
Too late I now perceive 'twas cowardly  
Like cruel assassin to assault one's foe.  
I might have met him on the battle field  
And joyed to call him to a stern account.  
Now am I branded with th' assassin's name,  
And die a felon's death, and my poor love,  
Sweet Helen, who so firmly trusted in  
Mine honour, sees me fallen thus so low !

*Enter HELEN noiselessly, the Jailor letting her in.*

*Helen.* So low and still so loved, yet shalt thou  
    higher  
Rise on repentant wing than ever honour

Uplifted thee. Repentance leads to heaven.

*Courtland.* O unexpected bliss! How cam'st  
thou here?

I heard thee not.

*Helen.* Thy mind was so intent  
Brooding upon thy bitter destiny  
Thou didst not hear the jailor turn the key;  
Him have I bribed and bought some hours for  
gold.

*Courtland* [*sighing*]. The king is dead, and I  
have thrown away  
My life on a false cast!

*Helen.* Now Courtland, I  
Did ever wonder why you loved this man,  
This cold Charles Stuart, for a king was he,  
I've heard my uncle Cromwell thus describe,  
Nor hot nor cold, a lukewarm-blooded man,  
Whobeheld his best friends lose life, love, fortunes,  
And all his people's blood out-poured, unmoved—  
Never slept he the worse or smiled the less,  
Thus Stafford died, but could not save his king.  
A born intriguer too, but yet so weak,  
He'd blab his secrets to the running brook.  
To each new business that he entered in  
Gave only half his heart, the other half

88    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

We've spoken of things less personal to beguile  
us,

Knowing the while our thoughts did never stray  
From that pale shadow that sits at my door  
And will not be gainsaid. Then, let me tell  
thee

How died the king, that I by thus recounting  
So brave a death may be inspired to die.  
Never shall I forget that solemn scene.  
Cold dawned the day, a sharp wind from the  
east

Blew piercingly, and the pale muffled sun  
By fits and starts gleamed through the scudding  
clouds

As one dismayed what earth disclosed to view.  
For lo, a multitude of living men  
Made black the ground, thronged every vacant  
space,

Swarmed up the trees, and lined the house-tops  
all.

Soldiers on soldiers round the scaffold packed  
Stood in their serried ranks silent and stern.  
The gazing populace afar off wept,  
And some occasionally their voices lifted  
To the mute heavens above in prayer for him.

"Sir," said the Bishop to the King, "you have  
 But one stage more to go, which altho' rough,  
 Painful, and grievous, know, it is but short !  
 Think it will bear thee from this earth to heaven !"  
 "I go," replied the King, "from a corruptible  
 And earthly crown to incorruptible,  
 Where no disturbance e'er can come, or care."  
 Then, doffed his coat and unto Juxon turned,  
 Giving the garter, said with emphasis,  
 "Remember !" and then, kneeling, laid his head  
 Upon the block, and after a short prayer  
 Signed with his hand. A moment the keen  
 axe

Caught the sun's ray, glittered, descended, fell.  
 Into that element from which he drew  
 Then breathed he out his life, and all was o'er.  
 And for a little space amazed men stood  
 Gazing in breathless awe. No sound outbroke  
 From that still, silent crowd. Till suddenly  
 The fascination of that fearful spell  
 Was loosed, and then up from the wronged  
 earth

One long loud cry of lamentation rose  
 Unto the heavens above, like to the roar  
 Of outraged nature when she wounds herself :

Thus died the king that day.

[MURIEL *while he speaks listens with face pressed to the bars of the prison window and peers in for a moment.*

*Helen.*

So shall not you !

Hark, Courtland dear, there is no way but this.

My uncle Cromwell, deaf to every prayer,

Only relents thus far. You, with two more,

To draw lots for your lives ; one is to die

Who draws the blank, the other two be saved.

But to the hazard of such fearful chance

I dare not leave thee, therefore have I brought

Concealed about me sharp files and a rope—

Yon window bars are not too thick to file.

[*Looks at the window and starts back.*

Look, look ! didst thou see aught, or was't my  
fancy ?

Methought I saw a face pressed to those bars,

A stern, pale face, looking with hate upon us !

*Courtland.* Dear love, nought saw I, it was  
but your fear

Produced this offspring of a heated brain.

*Helen.* God grant it were ! A cold sweat bathes  
my brow

At thought of failure. But to go on, the bars

Being filed, the silk rope used, there stands with-  
out,

A hundred yards from here, a gallant steed,  
Ready equipped for flight. Say to the man  
The word "Surrender," then off like the wind  
To the sea coast of Kent, where I'll thee meet.

[*The Jailor lets MURIEL in as she speaks  
the last sentence.*

*Muriel.* Where thou shalt never meet him,  
foolish girl!

I have heard all, and he shall not escape.

As thou hast stolen my love, I'll steal his  
life—

He shall not live to be another's love.

I hate thee, girl! Feel my love's vengeance  
now!

*Courtland.* Muriel!

*Helen.* Thy cousin Muriel!

*Muriel.* Yes, Muriel,  
His cousin Muriel! Muriel—would that the  
name

Could choke your throat with name of Muriel!

*Helen.* I did not err, my fears foreboded  
well,

Such face I saw, pressed to yon window-bars.

*Courtland.* How hath this lady harmed thee ?

How have I,

Thy cousin, wronged thee, thou so strange a  
course

Pursue, unnatural in one so young,  
In one so beautiful 'gainst Nature's end  
Harshly revolting, false to woman's sex ?

*Muriel.* How hath this lady harmed me, how  
hast thou ?

Dost ask me this in sober seriousness,  
Thou, Harry Courtland ? Rare simplicity !  
How have ye harmed me, pretty children sweet,  
Innocent children with your baby loves,  
Ye have not harmed me, surely ! O no ! No !  
There is no harm in breaking human hearts !  
There is no harm in stealing love from life !  
But there shall come a time ye twain shall learn  
Life without love's a heaven without a sun ;  
Then, think of me, that ye have stolen away  
That most melodious music from my life,  
That he who listens once for ever finds  
How harsh a discord jars upon the ear,  
How long the day till evening shadows fall,  
How slow th' untuneful hours come and go,  
Like croaking ravens flapping heavy wings



Homeward in weary flight at eve's hushed hour ;  
 How lone the night, how mournfully the moon  
 Wandereth in heaven, and Morn with pensive  
 tears

Smileth how sadly where sweet love is not.  
 Then doth all Nature grieve, life listless lies,  
 So that we loathe to live.

*Helen.* Would that thy mind  
 Were beauteous, lady, as thy face is fair,  
 But this cruel, jealous, and turned rancid love  
 Betrays the glory of thy womanhood  
 And odious shows before my lover's eyes.

*Courtland.* 'Tis false, you never loved me,  
 cousin, though  
 You say so. Love, that pure and heavenly name,  
 Call not that love where dwells revenge and  
 hate,

Or those malignant passions sanctify  
 By the sweet name of love. What love divine,  
 That doth of earthly things approach below  
 Nearest perfection, love most pitiful !  
 Love that is tender to all things which breathe—  
 To call thine love, were bitter blasphemy.

*Muriel.* Bitter thy words and hard ! Cousin,  
 time was,

Before her beauty robbed me of thy love,  
When you would kiss this poor, loathed Muriel,  
And "cousin" her full fifty times a day,  
Instilling the sweet poison of thy love  
Into this heart till I could love none else.

*Helen.* 'Twas but the foolish fancy of a boy  
Not knowing his own mind. Oft have I seen  
In the green, sentimental days of youth,  
When boyhood apes the manners of grown men,  
This thing some call calf love. For, if per-  
chance

Some slip of a girl with a pert, pretty face,  
Or mincing maiden, throws her glances round,  
The poor fool flattered in the fowler's net  
Is caught straightway, and in his fancy's folly  
Deems he loves her who loves her flattery.  
For vanity in youth, as too in age,  
Is oft the rudder women steer men by.

*Muriel.* Methinks the mincing maiden of your  
story  
Doth stand before me here.

*Courtland.*                    Cease, Muriel, cease !  
Sweet Helen, come and stand beside me here,  
And, Muriel, hearken to such words as fall  
From lips of dying men, for you in me

Behold a man whose days on earth are told.  
A few short hours and then you'll be revenged,  
Muriel, of all your wrongs, if that I wronged you  
As you do say I did.

*Helen.* I cannot bear it.  
Rather than see him die, I will, cruel lady,  
Yield up my love to thee. Let him escape  
And fly with thee away. Ah, sooner this!  
Sooner see him another's wedded one  
Than dead by the next sun.

*Courtland.* Courtland, now art thou  
Most greatly loved indeed. O, wondrous thought,  
That in extremest need of this our life,  
No hope of gain, no fear of penury,  
No appetite, no want can influence thee,  
O love of woman, marvellous in thy might!  
Helen, I thank thee; thou thus show'st to me  
The wondrous spirit of a woman's love.  
Yet pardon me for this love's difference, sweet!  
If I refuse life on such terms as these,  
Relinquish love for her I do not love!  
Say, where would be life's consolation then?  
Rather reverse, for whilst a man draws breath  
He cannot bear in his own eyes to be  
Unworthy of existence. Love, know this,



Thou scorching torture, fever of the soul,  
Conscience, I'll pluck thee out for my revenge.  
I will not know thee—die! Whisper no more  
Thy better promptings and ill-timed advice,  
I'll have none of them. Ho! what jailor there?

*Enter Jailor.*

Look to thy prisoner well or he'll escape.  
Thy kindness is imposed upon, for know  
Yonder fair lady carries files and rope  
To aid his flight this night. *[Goes out.*

*Helen.* O fiendish hate!  
Thou art not love, but jealousy grown cruel.  
A tiger suckled thee, and at thy birth  
Compassion from thy cradle fled aghast.  
Lost, lost, now all is lost!

*Jailor.* Yea, by God's wounds,  
A scurvy trick thou would'st have played me,  
lady,  
To set me target for great Cromwell's wrath.  
Come now, depart!

*Helen.* O do not send me hence!  
One hundred pounds in gold to stay with him!

*Jailor.* One hundred pounds?

***Helen.*** In gold !

*Jailor.* The risk is great—  
 But yet, one hundred pounds—the soldier oft  
 For a few pence encounters death each day.  
 One hundred pounds !—I'll risk it ; lady, stay ;  
 But when I whistle thou must straight depart,  
 But with the early dawn ere he goes hence  
 Thou canst have yet one hour. Play no more  
 tricks,  
 Give me the file and rope ; I'll leave thee now,  
 But shall be near at hand, and on the watch.

[*Exit.*

SCENE 4. *Same night. A witch's hut. A black cat seated by the fire, on which is a cauldron bubbling, into which the OLD WITCH from time to time casts in herbs, muttering a spell. A white owl placed on the door.*

*Old Witch.*

Simmer, simmer, boil and bubble !  
Ten to one and one to ten  
Blood to bone and then a double  
Pinch of weed from poisonous fen,

SC. 4.] ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. 99

Let the parts compacted be  
With a careful nicety.  
Thus says cunning Hecate.

*[The black cat mews and the white owl hoots,  
and the OLD WITCH hastily puts on the  
lid and calls out.]*

*Old Witch.* Who, at this hour of night, when  
all the village

Is fast asleep, comes to my lonely hut ?

*Muriel.* I, Muriel, on matters of great weight.

*Old Witch.* I smelt blood in the wind, the  
frosty fire

This eve burnt red like blood. What want'st  
thou, speak !

A love decoction of charmed crystal dew  
Gathered at midnight, when the moon is full,  
From off a grave where two fond lovers sleep ?  
Or that sweet tincture of th' Arabian sea  
Whiter to wash thy skin than softest snow ?  
Or would'st thou dive into the mighty past,  
Or in the future plunge thy wondering gaze  
To know that which blesses not man to know ?

*Muriel.* None of these things.

*Old Witch.* Ah ! Ah ! I knew 'twas blood !

100 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

For who would come on such a night as this  
Out of a warm and comfortable house  
Unto my lonely hut, but that th' intent ?  
But ill could brook the light of searching day,  
But in the night all colours seem alike.  
What would'st thou, then ? A poison that will  
suck,

Strange, imperceptibly the life away  
Like to a slow consumption ; or dost wish  
A quick revenge, a death that leaves no trace ?  
There is a drug used in the Indian clime,  
A wanderer from that land gave it to me ;  
This I can give thee, but the price is high.

*Muriel.* For potions, poisons, came I not, old  
witch ;

But mark you, I will pay you with much gold  
For that I have in hand. List to me well,  
And learn what I require. When that the sun  
First lights his golden chamber in the east,  
Sir Harry Courtland with two prisoners more  
Await the call of death. Now comes my plot,  
For Cromwell has decreed that only one  
Out of these three shall die—who draws the  
blank.

They being reluctant thus themselves to draw



This their dread destiny, it is arranged  
A little child shall choose the lots for them.  
The third lot is a blank, the other two  
Are thus inscribed, "Life given by God." Now  
list!

Unto the jailor as each lot is drawn  
The child them gives, he in his turn again  
Delivers to the prisoners, that each one  
May read therein his fate. Here comes your  
part.

You must persuade the jailor for a bribe,  
(I've noted he's a mean and sordid wretch),  
Having beforehand notched the blank, to tell  
The child, on pain of death, to draw that first,  
Which she will see marked with a little cross.  
The jailor then this will to Courtland give,  
Who will be led off to immediate death;  
And he'll not wed the pretty Puritan,  
The Roundhead's daughter, hell's hate be with  
her!

*Old Witch.* Lady, a difficult and dangerous  
task,

Which, if found out, would jeopardise our necks.

*Muriel.* Therefore the sum shall be propor-  
tionate,

102 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

Three hundred pounds in gold.

*Old Witch.* When? Where?

*Muriel.* At once.

*Old Witch.* 'Tis done, give me the gold!

*Muriel.* Take then this bag,

Three hundred sovereigns, count; this now, and  
more,

Two hundred more, shall be thine when he's  
dead.

*Old Witch.* Beautiful gold, how dear thou art  
to me!

I am thy lover, with delirious joy

I feel thy touch intoxicate my veins.

*Muriel.* How bright it gleams! it sparkles in  
the light.

I could believe some evil spirit dwelt

Hidden within those heaps to pluck me down

Damned to perdition. Minister of hell!

What canst thou not, gold, buy? Fame, king-  
doms, kings,

And mitred peers and ministers of state,

History records have all been bought for gold,

Yea, bought and sold again.

*Old Witch.* Then, why should I,

Poor weak old woman, luckless, none too good,

Oppressed by pinching penury, live on  
And lack what mightier ones have sinned to  
win ?

A man must die some day, why not to-day ?  
Relieve him of the burden of more care ;  
Early or late what matters, since the hour  
Inevitable comes, or fast or slow ?

*Muriel.* Gold, subtle charmer of the souls of  
men,  
What fearful fascination, glittering folly  
Lie in thy yellow discs, what deeds unholy ?  
Methinks I almost fear thee lying there,  
Methinks I almost hate thee lying there,  
Pale gold, the price of many a hideous sin,  
Placing the means of crime within my hands.  
How often hast thou bought and sold men's  
lives,  
Thou heavy curse upon the human race,  
How mighty is thine influence ! Not the moon  
That draws the sea with all her billowy waves  
Hast empire like thine ; the moods of men  
Thou swayest as the wind a field of corn.  
Thou art a tempest, and their souls fall down  
And dance before thee, like to woodland leaves  
Scattered before the blast.

104 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

*Old Witch.*

I'll hide this gold.

[*Goes to next room.*

*Muriel.* Why had I wealth to tempt this wretch  
with gold ?

Why had I wealth to ruin mine own soul ?  
Had I not wealth, I had not had the power  
To use this wealth to worldly wickedness,  
But since I have the power, Courtland must  
die!

Who spoke of wickedness? I'm but Fate's  
minister—

Ere we were ushered in this mournful world  
The dark decrees of Destiny thus stood,  
He to take love from life, I life from love.  
Which were the greater wrong, who takes my  
life

Or robs me of my love? A thousand times  
Who spoils poor life of love, for who takes life  
Cannot with all his hate dismiss the dead  
On their lone journey disinherited,  
For love flies with the dead and with them dwells,  
Enters the spirit land unconquerable.  
Since life is nought, then, in the accout of  
love,  
And he robbed me of love, in justice now

I rob him of his life, but even then  
 The debt's not paid, for they may love in heaven  
 Whilst I am lost in hell. What voice within  
 Murmurs its whispered warning that this deed  
 Will evermore hang heavy on my soul  
 Black with the crime of murder? . . . Shall I  
 relent,

Turn from my purposed hate? O weak of will  
 And womanish of mind! . . . Again, that voice  
 Whispers its warning! . . . No! . . 'tis but my  
 fear!

Am I grown superstitious that I stand  
 Wavering like all our sex irresolute  
 At the prime moment?  
 When golden Opportunity loudly cries  
 For instant action, places just revenge  
 Within my grasp . . . shall I let go th' occasion,  
 And like a nun fold my meek hands in prayer,  
 And kneel to bless them on the bridal day,  
 Saying, "Dear Coz, be happy in thy bride,"  
 When I should be that bride, stand in that  
 place?

I'm made of sterner stuff. That thought recalls  
 My halting purpose. Henceforth I discard  
 All woman scruples, custom-born or bred

106 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT III.

From the soft nature of our weaker sex.

[OLD WITCH *returns softly, listens to her, and speaks aside.*

*Old Witch.* [Aside.] Now at her side her better  
angel stands,

Pleading—so priest would say—and the dark  
fiend

Listens with frown and smile of scorn, disdain

Upon his sneering lips. Tut, tut! I shall

Soon grow religious if I talk more thus.

Know I not women well? The deadliest crime

Is oft preparèd by such meditations.

Have I not known them oft in ardent love

To swear most endless truth, then break their  
oaths

With such sweet grace it seems propriety.

In mournful monologue, regretful words,

They moralize the weakness of their sex,

Ere to another love transfer their own,

Take comfort from this thought to sin again.

But she must not relent—that darker angel

Will I be at her side I imaged forth.

[*Goes up to her.*

Come, come, the hour runs late, and ere the  
morn

SC. 4.] ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. 107

Much to be done! My lady, let's away.

Wouldst have him live to kiss another bride?

Let us away. I'll to the jailor now.

Be you to-morrow present when the lots

Are drawn to see the triumph of your gold!

*[Exeunt.]*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *Prison as before. Early morn.*

COURTLAND *in prison, speaks to HELEN.*

*Courtland.* Farewell, beloved, for now  
The clamourous cock doth call the coming morn,  
Dawn reddens in the east, and smiling Day  
With beauteous eyes, dreamy with sleep, and dew  
Clinging to her soft garments diamonded  
With many a crystal drop, fresh as a flower  
Uprises from her couch. The cawing chough  
Wings his wet way through early mist of morn.  
Nature awakes, and I awake to die,  
For something tells me that my lot is cast  
And never sun shall rise on me again.  
How fair through yonder casement looks the  
world,  
Quickening and quivering with fresh life and joy.  
Should Nature smile thus on my dying day,  
And wear no mourning robe?

*Helen.*

O make not worse





Our parting with anticipated change.  
 How my sad spirit shrinks and shudders, love,  
 At that word, "parting." Yea ! for who shall say  
 When we shall meet. If in the spirit-land  
 They talk of love and muse man's hapless fate,  
 Why then in heaven now many an angel's eyes  
 Are wet with tears, viewing this parting dire.  
 "Parting !" again that word escapes my lips,  
 As if my thoughts ambassadors to pain,  
 Proclaimed its advent that we shun in vain !

*Courtland.* Hope on, dear loving heart, for  
 love would die

Did we but cease to hope that love crowns all,  
 Hereafter, if not here, in worlds more fair.  
 The river of all love gains as it flows,  
 Till Time the keeper, with his keys in hand,  
 Opens death's lock-gates to that far fair land,  
 Then the full river, rushing to be free,  
 Joins the great ocean of Eternity.

*Helen.* And must we part, we who have loved  
 so well,

And have we met only to say farewell ?  
 Far other hopes I had ; they now have fled,  
 Gone are the dreams that gorgeous fancy bred.  
 O loved lost days we once together saw,

110 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT IV.

Cannot the future give like golden store?

*Courtland.* This is life's bitterness! 'Tis hard  
to part

Ere we're scarce conscious that our lives have  
kissed.

Look long into mine eyes that I may hold  
Thy image and thou mine. Hark, 'tis the hour.  
[*Strikes eight.*

*Jailor enters the prison.*

*Jailor.* Sir Harry, you must join the prisoners  
In the courtyard. My lady, you can wear  
This mask, and in the prison court view all  
Unnoticed and in safety. Come away!

*Courtland.* Kiss me one kiss,  
That if I die æons of ages may  
Embalm in memory's thought the bliss that earth  
Brought me from woman's love, [*kisses her*] and  
so, farewell.

SCENE 2. *The early morn. The prison courtyard.  
Three prisoners with troops drawn up. Among  
the spectators are MURIEL and HELEN dis-  
guised.*

*1st. Spectator.* Those are the three condemned  
to die ; thou see'st

Yon tall man with the clear-cut noble face ?  
That is Sir Harry Courtland. Heard you not,  
He tried to take the Lord Protector's life ?

*2nd Spectator.* Pale is his face, but brightly  
burns his eye

Flashing around, and all his bearing speaks  
Resistless courage, proud contempt of death,  
How great a contrast to yon shivering wretch  
Whose teeth fast chatter from excess of fear !

*3rd Spectator.* He is a mutineer, that other, too,  
Who sullen stands there scowling all around.

*4th Spectator.* I hope yon shivering wretch will  
draw the blank ;

It were a pity a brave man should die  
And such a swine survive !

*1st Spectator.* Nay, be not hard,

112 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT IV.

Neighbour, methinks life is to him as dear  
As any other man, and, being a coward,  
Oft tastes the bitterness of death, yet dies not ;  
But the brave man can only die but once,  
And in a moment that sharp taste is passed,  
Therefore the brave die well. But look, here come  
The officer and guard.

*Enter Officer and Picket Officer.*

*2nd Spectator.* Listen, he speaks !

*Officer.* Halt ! Right about ! Rest on your  
arms reversed !

*Officer.* Jailor !

*Jailor.* Yes sir !

*Officer.* Where is the child to draw ?

*Jailor.* Here sir, [*Brings forward a little girl.*]  
this girl of ten, knowing not what  
Depends upon the paper that she takes  
Will draw for them.

*Officer.* Sir Henry Courtland, you  
Will be the first for whom the lot is drawn,  
The Jailor then will give it to your hand  
For you to ope and read yourself your fate.

*Courtland.* Now hope, now fear, alternate thrill  
my veins.

Away with fear, but not away with hope,  
That were unnatural beyond life's law.  
If life come I will thank it, but if death,  
It doth but snatch what later it would take  
Some few years further on. Yet, it were  
sweet

To live for Helen's sake who loves me well,  
Too well for earthly peace.

*Jailor.* Here is the hat.

Now, child ; put in your hand and draw from  
thence

One of those papers three.

*[The child draws and gives the lot to the Jailor.]*

Sir Harry Courtland,

Take now this paper, unfold it and read ;  
God give your honour luck !

*1st Spectator.* Behold how bravely,  
Without a single tremor of the hand,  
He takes the lot !

*2nd Spectator.* Ah, poor dear gentleman,  
How calmly he unfolds it. See, he looks,  
And not a quiver of the eye betrays  
What awful sentence in that lot may lie.

*Officer.* Prisoner, we wait thy sentence to pro-  
ceed.



And one low moan proclaims Sir Harry Court-  
land

Dies for th' attempted murder of Cromwell.

Ha, ha, he'd tie my broomstick arms ! ha, ha !

He'd send me to be burnt !

*Muriel.*

That voice, that face !

I dreamt of such a hag, methought, last night

So old, so wicked. Off, thou scoffed thing, off,

Thou living ulcer ! Thou disease embodied

In form of human shape ! Cruel bloated spider

Fattened on blood of murdered innocents,

I do suspect some devilish treachery here.

[OLD WITCH *goes.*

Ah ! Has she gone ? How my head burns and  
reels !

Who spoke of death ? How my head burns and  
reels !

Who spoke of death ? Methought one was to die ?

Where is Sir Harry Courtland ? He's to draw !

Why isn't he here ? [*Addresses a spectator.*

Thou gaping fool, speak ! speak !

Harry, dear Harry ! O my God, he's gone !

Murdered ! My Harry murdered ! done to death

By wicked plots and false and traitorous means !

[*Falls down in a faint.*

116 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT IV.

*1st Spectator.* Stand farther back ! Stand farther back, I say !

Give her more room, 'tis air, more air she wants.  
Poor lady, 'tis her sweetheart I do fear !

*2nd Spectator.* Burn o'er her face a feather.

*3rd Spectator.* No, no, no !

Plash some cold water on her forehead pale !

*4th Spectator.* Bleed her a little in the arm,  
I've heard

'Tis capital for faints !

*1st Spectator.* Stuff, rubbish all.

Give her some brandy from this flask. That's right,  
Open those pearly gates and pour between !

Alas, poor thing, to lose her lover thus !

These rich folks have their troubles like us too.

*3rd Spectator.* Hush ! see, she moves, and now  
her beauteous eyes

Slowly unclose, gazing perplexed around,

As if the fearful memory of some thought

Haunted her mind. Alas, tell her not now

The dreadful truth, or she will faint again.

Here, neighbours, lift her gently from the ground.

Let us convey her to the jailor's house

That she may rest awhile. Softly, now then !

[*Raise her up and carry her in.*]



SCENE 3. *The Tower Wharf, night-time. The crowd waiting for the torchlight procession.*

*1st Spectator.* An thou want a smack in the chops, push before me again!

*1st Citizen.* Who pushed, sour bones? In such a crowd 'tis each one for himself.

*3rd Citizen.* Come, come, neighbours! no quarrelling, take it all in good part!

*Sailor.* Easy there, easy. Shiver my timbers! No you don't, not if I know it, you don't get in front of me!

*Woman.* Lawks-a-mercy! I'm squashed to death!

*Sailor.* Cling hold of me, my hearty! my pretty one! my charming little clipper!

*1st Woman.* Hullo, there's Mother Jeff, what wants the old witch here?

*2nd Woman.* O don't let her come anigh me for the Lord's sake! When Mother Jeffrey meets me, she makes me break out into a cold sweat all over. For 'er has two grey eyes as can strike through you like knives, and seems to

118 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT IV.

burn one's inside like a devil's fire, and 'er curse is that awful, and 'er would go and curse anybody for three-ha'pence; no angel could fly by safe when 'er curse is flying about.

*Merchant.* Hark! Those guns sound as if the Swedish ambassador had just arrived. I hear he is to be escorted in grand procession to the Houses of Parliament, where Cromwell receives him in state. 'Twill be a fine sight.

*Sailor.* Did'st e'er set eyes on this Cromwell? What kind of a bloke is he?

*3rd Citizen.* I once saw him at a distance, that was all.

*Woman.* I managed to get into Westminster once when he was there. Lawks! there was a rush. My beautiful best bonnet trimmed with pink, and such a beautiful duck of a bonnet it was too, got squashed as flat as a pancake. I was a fool to put it on, and so said mother. But there was that Mary Ann, whom I couldn't abide, for carrying on so with John the butcher, dressed that outrageous that I thought I'd show her what real gentility was; but then, poor thing, she never had no taste to speak of, and when she goes to church with her John on Sun-

day she's up in a balloon of pride, and her stomach is puffed up as high as a fancy puffer pigeon, in her feathers and her furbelows.

*Sailor.* Don't carry so much sail, my pretty craft. How about Cromwell?

*Woman.* Would'st take the words out of my mouth, you rogue?

I marked him from the rest, a rich black suit  
Of velvet wore he, round his shoulders, too,  
A mantle of the same, and, I remember,  
How I pinched Jane and said, "Look at his hat,  
What a broad band of gold, Jane, do you  
see?"

And she said, "Hush! he's going to speak, look,  
look!"

And I looked and saw him not far from me.  
His head was bare, and now and then a breeze  
Lifted the light brown hair, which in some parts  
Seemed streaked with grey, as did his moustache  
too.

For, mark you, I should say as old was he  
As father, who, let's see, is fifty-five  
Come April next. He looked a comely man,  
One that could give and take a good blow too.  
None of your scented, girlish gentlemen.

120 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT IV.

Thick-set in stature, height some five feet ten,  
I saw no more nor heard, the crowd pushed so  
That I near fainted and was carried out.

*Merchant.* I was there too, and thus he seemed  
to me,

A soldier born, alert, yet kingly like.  
Gracious, methought, withal, and I felt awed  
Looking upon him, why, I cannot say.  
But there was that within his face which made  
Men list to him, whether they liked or no.  
His deep-set, earnest eyes, with grave, sad look,  
Seemed to search you through. His massive  
head,

Set upon rock-like shoulders, did disclose  
The lion in him, and his full, firm lips  
Dreadful determination showed, yet touched  
With tender lines of human sympathy,  
And the curved tend of his broad nostrils told  
How that they could dilate, like war horse proud,  
Indignant, sniffing battle with fierce joy,  
Pawing the ground, impatient for the strife.  
Neighbours, methought while thus surveying  
him,

How grand to have a man like this one's friend,  
How terrible to find in him a foe!

*4th Citizen.* Ah, neighbours, to the guilty his  
was, aye,

A name more dreaded than the thunderbolt  
Crashing from heaven ; his justice followed swift.  
Dost recollect the tale of Pilton Bee ?  
" Hang me the fellow out of hand," wrote he  
" And I'm your warrant, for he shot a boy,  
A widow's only son, her sole support,  
At Pilton Bee, so God and man," he said,  
Neighbours, mark you his words, " so God and  
man

Must at his punishment rejoice."

*1st Citizen.*

Well said,

A wretch like that deserved to die, but yet,  
Though he was stern, considerate was he too,  
And just and tender, when th' occasion called,  
But quick and sudden as a lightning flash  
Flamed on his enemies, blasting all rogues.  
Oft at the sudden mention of his name  
A stampede seized the guilty, and the brave  
Gazed on the coming field with anxious hearts  
High beating for their cause threatened so  
dire,  
With teeth set hard and lips compressed and  
hands

**122    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS.    [ACT IV.**

That ever wandered to their swords to feel  
A doubtful safety there, with flashing eyes  
And moody minds, resolved before such foe  
To face the worst if that the worst meant  
    death,  
So much the name of Cromwell moved all  
    hearts.  
He like a comet in the Eastern sky  
Blazing doth leave long tracks of light behind.

*Enter two Horsemen.*

*Sir Richard Onslow.* Room there, good folks,  
make way, make way!

*Colonel Jones.* Well met, Sir Richard, go you to  
Whitehall? I'm bound that way myself. What  
time's the meeting?

*Sir Richard.* The Parliament will attend his  
Highness this night at seven to hear his final  
answer as to the matter of the title of king  
offered him by the Parliament.

*Colonel Jones.* Think you he will accept?

*Sir Richard.* Well, 'tis a doubtful point. The  
lawyer party all do favour it, but the military

are set dead against it ; so that Cromwell, who is a very king, though not in name, does not care to offend his soldier friends. For, look you, the army is his only hope. The Cavaliers are plotting for their king, and the Presbyterians, to see Cromwell ousted, would, if they saw their way, make common cause against him.

*Colonel Jones.* Come, let us be going, I would not miss this speech of Cromwell's for much. Ah, yonder comes the procession.

*[A torch-light procession. The Swedish Ambassador officially escorted by Whitlock, Montague, etc. Out-riders, gilt coaches.*

*Apprentices.* England for ever ! Long live the Lord Protector !

*Sailor.* Hurrah for Blake ! Hurrah for Montague ! our famous sea captains. Down with the Spaniards !

*All.* *[Shout.]* Down !

*Merchant.* Did'st ever hear tell of the like before ? The whole Spanish fleet attacked, boarded, defeated, taken, burnt, and sent to the bottom of the sea as food for fishes ! 'Tis the visible vengeance of Heaven on Antichrist ! 'Tis

124 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT IV.

the hand of the Lord hath smitten the Popish nation.

*Sailor.* When our English sun shines forth in all its majesty, the stars of other nations look less bright. Our Lord Protector's a name to conjure with. Blow my top-sails if Mazy, the French parley-vous, doesn't fear him more than the devil.

*Citizen.* Ah, he stands no nonsense, he'll have his pennyworth for a penny. He knows what's due to old England.

*Sailor.* Under him we fought the Spaniards, and took their gold. The steel of Spain bent like masts before the tempest of our war; and Holland, with her ten thousand sail, we swept from every sea.

*Merchant.* There's no dispute but England has arrived at a pitch of glory under this Cromwell.

*[Procession passes out of sight, the crowd disperse.]*



SCENE 4. *Banqueting hall, Whitehall, hung with arras. The LORD PROTECTOR standing with a chair of state behind him. Galleries full of ladies. Lifeguards in grey frock-coats with velvet welts. Lanes of gentlemen, crowds of public. SPEAKER WIDRINGTON presents a petition of eighteen articles, engrossed on vellum.*

*Speaker Widrington.* May it please your  
Highness, we the Parliament  
Of England, Scotland, Ireland too, here met,  
In voice of these three nations offer you  
The title of a king, for, that they say  
The body of our ancient English laws  
Revolves upon the axis of kingship,  
And is so bound up with our charters old,  
And so well known these many hundred years  
That we, and all the people of these realms,  
"Nolumus Leges Angliæ mutari."  
'Tis then the public voice that offers you  
This title of a king, so please your Highness.  
*Cromwell.* Hither I now, Mister Speaker, am  
come

126 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT IV.

To answer this weighty and grave affair,  
This title of kingship, by you now offered,  
Which honour done me by the Parliament  
No man can put a greater value on,  
Which in my heart I ever hope to keep  
A grateful memory of. I say not this  
To compliment you, sirs! For we are all  
Past complimenting now, past idle praise.  
To make things plain and clear what I assert,  
With me a little to my former life  
Look back. I was a gentleman by birth,  
Neither at great height living in the world,  
Nor yet too low. Not to be tedious,  
From being a captain of a troop of horse,  
I by degrees was lifted and advanced  
From trust to trust, from lower place to greater,  
(God helping and not suffering me to fall),  
Until the chiefest power of all this land  
I found committed, centered in myself,  
And named the Lord Protector of these realms.  
The evil-voiced tongue of the world I know  
Slanders my name. The craft of such a man  
It was, say some, that hast brought this about.  
"Would not the Lord Protector make himself  
Great, and his family great? Doth not he make

Feignèd necessities to work his end?"

And as they say upon the Continent,

"There are in England now some five or six  
Men of a cunning skill that work these things."

O, what a blasphemy is this, my friends,

To say that men bring forth these things, when  
God

Works them Himself. Judge you, will He bear  
this?

These men that live without God in the world,

That live upon their masses, service-books,

Their dead and carnal worship. Can we marvel

That they, thus strangers to the works of God,

Acknowledge not His dispensations wise?

Alas! I know the censures of the world

May quickly pass on me, are passing now!

But I thank God I know, and have found out

Where to lay all the weight upon me laid,

I mean the weight of scorn, reproach, contempt,

That hath been cast upon me by them all!

But, to proceed, I, standing in this place,

Which place I took not so much out of hope

Of doing good, as out of strong desire

To stave off evil and mischief to come,

Which I did see imminent on this land,

128 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT IV.

I, standing in this place, myself compared  
To a good constable set guard to keep  
The peace of all the parish. This was all  
The height, extent of my ambition, this.  
My lords, if I may say so, I have lived  
Much in the fire these last days of my life,  
In many troubles, and my westering sun  
Quickly approaches now th' horizon's edge,  
The daylight of my life is nearly done,  
And soon the night comes when no man can  
work.

The only liberty I therefore ask  
To freely vent my scruples, doubts, and fears,  
And on this subject of kingship to say,  
That may be fit for you to offer which  
May not be fit for me to undertake.  
And if I know, as I indeed do know,  
That very generally good men do not  
Swallow this title, then, I pray you, put  
Not such hard things on me—hard things, I mean,  
Hard unto *them*, which *they* cannot accept.  
Therefore, whilst unto others you grant rights  
And liberties, my lords, you surely will not  
Deny me this, liberty to refuse  
This title of kingship, the circumstance

SC. 4.] ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. 129

Of time and persons not permitting it.  
With this consideration, I now give  
This final answer to you, once for all,  
I cannot undertake the government  
With title of kingship, so you have now  
My answer to this weighty business grave. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A woodland path by the river, winter afternoon. Enter HELEN, reading out loud from a book.*

*Helen.* "He who hath kissed the chilly lips of  
death,  
And marked the marble face, loved, known so  
well,  
Impassive, unresponsive, his low breath  
Heard in the heavy silence seems to tell  
The lonely watcher more than all words saith,  
What gulf between them lies immeasurable,  
Between the mortal and the immortal. . . . Death,  
Whose veil none lifteth where those spirits dwell  
Beyond this cloud-wrapped earth. From sense  
unbound  
A fuller freedom, more excelling life,  
Above the touch of toil or care or strife,  
Have they exploring death's dark passage found.

A wondrous spirit walks this earth as man,  
And here fulfils a portion of life's plan ! ”  
Why, then, weep for the dead ? Can weeping  
warm him  
To earthly life again, bring back the flush  
To the pale cheek, light to the faded eye ?  
Can weeping breathe fresh blood in those poor  
veins,  
Make them pulsate with the strong stream of  
life ?  
Can weeping bring the sunbeam of his smile  
Back to the sweetest mouth by woman kissed ?  
It cannot. Then, why weep ? Is't for his sins ?  
They are forgiven, and his frailties all  
Hidden away by Him that for us died.  
Why weep then for the dead, the happy dead ?  
Why weep not rather for th' unhappy living,  
Closed round about with hours of carking care ?  
Why weep then for the dead ? Because the spirit  
Of man within us is a tender spirit,  
And human life is touched at human woe.  
Nor can we loose thus lightly from our lives  
The links that bind us to a loving soul  
And feel no pang and drop no human tear.  
The soul departed, like the sea, hath left

Its mark upon our stranded barks of time.  
Our personalities are so entwined  
One with another, that, upon our own  
The deep impression of another's spirit  
Is not effaced by death, rubbed out by time,  
But onwards circles, broadening out beyond  
This petty earth, this little space of time,  
From soul to soul, from earth to distant star,  
From star to sun, through the wide universe  
Links each to each with influence divine.  
So thy dear spirit, looking from those spheres,  
Sends its electric influence to my heart,  
Shines like a star upon my night of woe,  
Makes sorrow sanctified that I do weep  
In no rash mutiny 'gainst God's decree,  
But calmly, Hope not lost, like unto one  
That waits a passport to another land,—  
That far fair land that lies beyond the grave.—  
But who comes here ?

*Enter MURIEL, mad, singing.*

The North winds blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will the robin do then, poor thing ?



Poor, poor cock robin, here's some crumbs for  
thee ! *[Starts back.*

What hast thou done ? There's blood upon thy  
breast !

Hence, cursèd thing ! Speak, murderer ! Confess !  
Leer not thus on me with thy bold black eyes,  
Strut not towards me with such assured air  
Of claimèd fellowship ! I never knew thee !  
Sh ! sh ! away, away ! *[Claps her hands.]* out of  
my sight ! *[Gazes round.*

How bloody Nature looks inclined to-night,  
The sun sweats crimson, and the red-stained  
clouds

Like night assassins creep across the sky,  
As if some fearful deed were to be done.  
The rustling leaves, turned in the winter's wind,  
Are clotted o'er with scarlet clouts of blood.  
Rustle and shiver, shrink,—I know ye all !  
Ye are accomplices ! Ye joined the deed,  
And lent your aid unto the murderer's step,  
Bound up his feet with silence, that no sound  
Should play the tell-tale and alarm fair life,  
Then covered up the dead man with your leaves.  
Ah ! cursèd accomplices ! I know ye all !  
There, where the clay of yonder river bank

What name died on his lips—the last on earth?  
Didst say 'twas Helen? No, he ever loved  
His cousin, his own little Muriel! . . .

If that he draws the blank? Who said 'twas murder?

What art thou whispering to the forest now ?  
More gold ? Then take more gold ! [*Throws  
down some yellow forest leaves.*] prattlest  
thou still ?

Told I thee not to name that name again ?  
Is it not written here upon my heart  
In letters of deep blood, daily renewed.  
Should I not know too well that name—that  
name.

## Can I forget it through eternity?

*Helen.* O foul, most base, inhuman treachery !  
Can it be possible there walks the earth  
A woman, so young, so fair, thus cursed with  
crime ?

O lovely shell, outside thus wondrous fair,  
So foul a worm within. How out of gear  
Must be the world to see such sights as this !  
How grievous seems it, oh ! what error strange  
Beauty to be affixed and bound to folly,  
Clothèd in crime, nay, let us rather think  
'Tis but the accident of mortal life,  
Error lamentable, Nature's burlesque,  
That thus unnaturally doth mix such twain  
Beauty and Badness in one fellowship ;  
Or is it rather with intent to show  
How vain is beauty unadorned by Good,  
How meaningless ? Thus, hideous Jealousy,  
Thy frightful whirlpool sucks the spirit down  
To deeper depths than the abyss of hell.  
Thou poor mad creature, wreck of womanhood !  
Alas ! to come to this ! How hast thy sin  
Recoiled upon thyself and dragged thee down,  
Sad ruined spirit, cased in frame so fair !

*Muriel.* Who calls me mad ? A sin ? Who  
said a sin ?

136    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS.    [ACT V.

[*Whispers.*] I know her ! It is she who one time  
                  stole

To meet my lover in the woodland glade,  
For,—— [*Sings.*

“ It was a lover and his lass  
    Went to the woods together,  
And much they kissed, but soon, alas !  
    They quarrelled 'bout the weather.

“ And such a foolish tiny thing  
    As this two hearts did sever,  
For having thus lost love's first spring,  
    They found it again, never !

And——

“ And such a foolish tiny thing  
    As this two hearts did sever,  
The lover died, the maiden cried,  
    Alas ! it was the weather ! ”

*Helen.* O Muriel, by the memory of the dead,  
If any tender pang can touch thee now,  
Make clear to me what I so darkly guess at—  
Say, was my Henry murdered, foully slain ?  
Confess, relieve thy burdened soul of sin !

*Muriel.* What, what ! more babbling still ? told  
I thee not

To name that name—it cuts me like a knife !  
Dost want more gold ? See here, then, take  
more gold. [*Throws leaves.*]

Go now and leave me by the river bank,  
Dost thou not hear ? Go ! get thee gone, I say !  
*Helen.* Muriel ! 'Tis I, Helen !

*Muriel.* [*Gazing in the water, points.*] There  
where the water bubbles, dost see aught ?  
There in the waters—there ? Hush ! Hush !  
He calls,

“ I am Courtland, what hast thou done with me ? ”  
And raises his right hand and beckons us.  
Come ! we must go, you know !

[*Takes hold of HELEN'S hand.*]

*Helen.* Good God ! what fearful  
And wild imagination holds her now ?  
O help ! Help ! Help ! Kind heaven ! Is no  
one near ?

*Muriel.* Come, must I drag you ? Would  
you anger him ?

I would not make him angry for the world.  
See how he beckons with his blood-stained hand.  
Jump, jump ! [*She jumps and pulls HELEN in.*]

138    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS.    [ACT V.

*Helen.* I drown! sweet heaven, have mercy  
on our souls!

*[As the stream carries them away, the OLD  
WITCH comes forward from behind a  
bush.*

*Old Witch.* Suck them deep down, swift river,  
suck them down,

Thou wilt impose such silence on their lips  
No torture shall extort their secret, nor  
Bright gold it purchase, tho' heaped mountains  
high.

This is the safest silence, best of all,  
The silence sealed by death. For, should they  
blab

Where they have gone, no word from that far  
clime

E'er breaks the stillness of our atmosphere  
To tell what deed was done. But silence here  
Depends on love or hate, revenge or fear,  
And therefore's to be bought, but this alone  
Unpurchasable silence doth secure,  
The unreplying dead no questioning bear,  
Death doth cement their lips with such stiff  
clay.

I thank thee, river, for thy work—this deed

SC. 2.] ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. 139

Beknown to both was dangerous to my life.  
But now no living soul upon this earth,  
Save Jack the jailor, knows. Ah! let me think!  
To-night he comes to claim share of the gold,  
At eight o'clock unto my hut. What then?  
If that he ne'er went thence! I am alone.  
Why give my gold unto that coward wretch?  
Better to end him and the secret's safe.  
I'll keep the gold and in exchange give that  
Which some like better, called the gold of sleep!  
Ah! ah! the gold of sleep! The term is good,  
It pays the giver and receiver too.  
But see, the shadows of the evening throw  
Their warning of the night. Now must I go  
And straight prepare, ah! ah! the gold of sleep!  
[Exit.

SCENE 2. OLD WITCH'S *hut.* *Table laid for supper.* JACK the Jailor *nearing the hut.*

*Jack.* 'Tis Barnabee's big oak, I must be near  
The place, then, now. Ah! yonder gleams a  
light!  
Why, what a wretched den the old hag dwells in!

140    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT V.

Nature looks cursed around. The gloom, the  
stillness

Oppress me with their weight. [*Calls.*] Ho,  
Mother Jeff!

What, Mother Jeffrey, ho!—'tis freezing hard.  
How my ears tingle! Wer't not for the gold  
I would go back, so ugly looks this place,  
And fearful thoughts come crowding to my  
mind.

Can the dead haunt the living and to earth  
Return as messengers of vengeance sent?  
Now, Jack, don't moralise. Thou art not well  
To-night, this darkness——

[*Ghost of COURTLAND rises.*

Mercy! 'tis he! Ah!

I will confess. Mercy! a priest! a priest!

[*OLD WITCH throws open the door.*

*Jack.* Did'st thou see him?

*Old Witch.* See whom, thou fearful fool?

'Twas only my white owl.

*Jack.* Ah, say'st thou so?

The dread, the stillness of this lonely place  
Wrought on my fancy, but I could have sworn  
I saw him.

*Old Witch.* Pah! come sit thee down and sup.



A good warm draught of spiced ale will take  
This folly out of thee. Come, sit, eat, drink!

*[Both sit down to supper.]*

*Jailor. [Drinking.]* Ah, ah! beer's good on a  
cold winter's night,

It warms the cockles of the heart, Old Jeff!  
Now tell me. Did'st thou ever hap hear tell  
Of such a thing called Conscience by the priests?  
Is't to be bought, or comes it from the Court?

*Old Witch.* Ha! ha! I'll die with laughing—  
from the Court!

It oft goes thither, but it ne'er comes back.  
Have nought to do with Conscience, Jailor Jack!  
This Conscience is a knave, a fitful knave,  
It is the prince of devils, and will plague thee  
Worse than a fever or a deadly rheum.  
Sometimes, they say, it sleeps, but when it  
wakes,

A thousand nettles stinging the bare flesh  
Were rapture to its pain. O, it is cunning,  
And digs about the deeds of human life,  
Laying their roots bare to the eye of day,  
And with a virtuous and saintly air  
Finds fault with all. Say that a man hath robbed,  
Murdered, betrayed, stabbed, ravished any one,

142    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT V.

Straightway this villain Conscience, like a sneak,  
Will throw their ghastly shadows on his life,  
Leave him no peace, plague him a thousand  
ways,

Upbraid him as he sits in memory's chains  
So that he loathes to live. Then, Jack, beware,  
Beware of Conscience, Jack! And mark you  
this,

Never knew I a man who had it yet  
To cut throats well or earn a livelihood.  
And this is true of all, even at Court  
Much do they fear this surly knave Conscience,  
As too expensive, hinders all advancement.  
I pray thee, Jack, dismiss him from thy mind.

*Jack.* Zounds! Mother Jeff! a villain terrible,  
A very knave indeed you thus describe.  
I'll keep scot clear of him. 'Tis getting late,  
Give me another glass! This beer is good,  
Yet has, methinks, a bitter after-taste.  
But where's the gold? Go, bring the gold! 'Tis  
time

I should be moving! [*Ghost rises.*] Ha! What  
here again?

Why haunt'st me thus? Did I then murder  
thee

More than those other two? Haunt them, pale  
ghost!

I say it is not fair upon a man!

*Old Witch.* At it again, you fool! Did you  
thus blabber

In others' company our lives weren't worth  
An hour's purchase. 'Tis that cursed Conscience  
That's got hold of thee somehow, jailor Jack!

*Jailor.* Thinkest thou so? This beer's mudd-  
ling my brain.

Come, get the gold, I would be off at once.

*Old Witch.* [*Aside.*] Methinks it works, but  
yet it slowly works

His sluggish nature. I will parley now;  
'Tis a sure poison, he'll reel soon and faint.

*Jailor.* Come thou old hag, what art thou  
muttering there.

I tell thee, bring the gold!

*Old Witch.* What gold? Art drunk,  
Or dreaming? When the lady pays thy share  
I'll give thee that, no more!

*Jailor.* Old witch, thou liest!  
Give me the gold, or I will take it all.

*Old Witch.* I was but joking, Jack! I'll fetch  
the gold.



Cold and insensate metal of the earth,  
What art thou in comparison with life ?  
Yet, weighed 'gainst thee, the scale of life  
flies up

And men are butchered with less thought than  
beasts.

For gold, bright gold, what is not done for gold ?  
See, yon high-born and dainty damsel bred,  
With all her blushing charms the mother sells  
To him who highest bids. For gold the wife  
Breaks virtuous bonds of holy marriage bed,  
For gold the husband never seems to see it.  
For gold the statesman pawns his honour, votes  
Contrary to conscience, sells his country's peace.  
For gold the judge interprets false the law  
Against the innocent, lets go the guilty.  
For gold the murderer bares his bloody knife"—  
And to his word add these,—the witch at night  
With her accomplice supping, poisons him  
For envy of bright gold, who, dying, stabs  
The false hag to the heart—as thus—and thus !

[*Stabs her.*

*Old Witch.* I die ! The rushing blood chokes  
up my throat !  
But know my poison, though more slow, 's as sure

146      ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS.      [ACT V.

As is thy knife, the grave awaits thee too!

[Dies.

*Jailor.* Oh! Oh! that pain again! I feel it  
true,

The gates of death are opening wide for me.  
My will scarce holds its own against this sleep.

[Goes up to her.

How still she lies, her bony hands clenched  
tight

In death's last agony, with staring eyes,  
And the white hair dabbed here and there with  
blood.

Even in death her pale vindictive face  
Most hateful looks. What ill spirit dwelt there?  
I will set fire to this cursèd hole!

[Lights a torch and applies it to the thatch.

There burn, burn, burn! burn all our secrets up.  
What fearful crimes have been enacted here?  
Dissolve to ashes quite. Where is the gold?  
I may recover yet! [*Ghost rises.*] Mercy! O  
spare!

Glare not thus horribly! O look not thus!  
I'll hide thee from my sight!

[Puts his hands over his face.

O heavens! I cannot

SC. 3.] ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. 147

Shut out that face! The darkness hides it not!  
I faint, I fall, I fall! Can this be death?  
Are these the flames of hell that catch at me?  
Is this, gold, thy reward, torture and death?

*[Dies as the roof falls in.]*

SCENE 3. *A street in London. Morning.*

*1st Citizen.* Neighbour, good day, how goes it  
with thee—well?

Scarcely remember I such dreadful night,  
Such blood-congealing blasts of wind and sleet,  
Such glare of lightning and such horrid thunder,  
Such pouring seas of rain, such ink-massed  
clouds,

Methought 'twould be a heaven to see the sun  
Kissing the calm and gentle face of day.

*2nd Citizen.* Ah, such a night England hath  
rarely seen,  
Darkness sat on the city, not a light  
Glimmered in all her lone deserted streets,  
Through which the wild wind rushed like shriek-  
ing ghost

148    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT V.

Unroofing houses, dashing down the slates,  
Yea, window-casements and tall chimney tops  
Upon the ground beneath. Thick as fallen  
leaves,

In all the parks the mighty trees lie low  
Torn from the soil, their giant arms stretched  
wide

In mute protest, in ruin motionless.  
Then as the Spirit of the Tempest shrieked  
Along the river, fiercely Thames arose,  
And wild with swollen rage swept with its waves  
Great ships from their safe moorings to the sea.  
And many a craft and barge of lighter build,  
Caught in the maddened waters, swirled and  
sunk,

The wretched cry of poor departing souls  
Choked in the crash of heaven's artillery.  
God grant this night may presage not more woe  
Unto our land.

*3rd Citizen.* [*Coming up.*] A woeful time to  
England, alas, true!

Neighbours, I bring you heavy news, indeed ;  
Cromwell is dead, dead on his "Fortunate Day,"  
On which he won Dunbar and Worcester too.  
But now a nobler victory hath he gained,



His part in this world's war's forever o'er,  
No clarion now will call him to fresh fields,  
The tired soldier hath gone home to rest,  
And now enjoys the pension of long peace  
Paid by his Master whom he fought for here.  
The liberal-minded man who loved his God  
And grudged no service in his country's cause,  
Cromwell the stern, the passionate, the just,  
Cromwell the lion-hearted and the true,  
The faithful friend, the star of family life,  
Cromwell, the tender melancholy man,  
Nature's most splendid gift unto the age,  
Cromwell is dead, and England, widowed queen,  
Pale weeping mourns beside his lonely bier.

*1st Citizen.* Alas, and out alas! O heavy  
news!

In these unsettled times how sore a blow!  
The nation reels beneath the stroke of God.  
Alack for England now the lion's dead.

*2nd Citizen.* Whom hath he named as his  
successor, friend?

*3rd Citizen.* They say 'tis Richard, but I  
fear, I fear!

But time will show. God speed our English  
land!

150 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT V.

*1st Citizen.* Neighbours, farewell ; I will unto  
the Court,  
And hear how speeds the cause of Cromwell's son.  
[*They part.*

SCENE 4. *Some months after. Time, midnight.*  
*A gallows, with CROMWELL'S body hanging.*  
*Enter MILTON, led by a Roundhead Puritan.*

*Milton.* A little farther lead me, friend, now  
stop.  
You say that but a few short steps from here  
Cromwell's dead body, bound in rusty chains  
Clanks to each wandering breeze and sullen  
swings,  
And though I cannot see, falls on mine ear  
The creaking of the ghastly gallows tree  
Making a hideous music, his sole dirge !  
Mournful attestment of man's fleeting state !  
Is not the moon at full ?

*Puritan.* At full, and white  
The gallows gleameth, white the skin-pealed  
bones,  
And white the teeth, and white the grinning skull

Of him erstwhile Protector of this land.  
 Happy thou canst not see the direful change  
 In thy dear valued friend—'tis piteous!

*Milton.* And such is Fame, wind-shifty, trust-  
 less fame;

But yesterday the world's commanding king,  
 Whose frown paled nations and caused sleepless  
 nights,

To-day the mock of every wandering breeze,  
 Sport of the elements, a tale for children  
 Told by their nurses on a winter's night.  
 A laughter to the sun and moon and stars,  
 At this mad freaky world and doings of men.  
 A banquet for each lean and hungry bird  
 That flapping comes to perch on that poor head.  
 Yet rain and winter's frost, sunshine, thaw, snow,  
 The rude inclemencies of nature wild,  
 Are, Cromwell, kind, friendly, compared to fame,  
 And kinder far than the cruel hearts of men.  
 Dull and insensate age! What welcome this  
 To give your noblest? This, the reward  
 To one who fought such battles in your cause  
 And spent his life to do his country good,  
 Painting proud history's page with glorious deeds,  
 That star-like glitter in the crown of time,

152 ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS. [ACT V.

And is it thus you treat your worthiest ones,  
And make a mock of every human worth,  
To snatch his body from the scarce cold grave,  
Load it with chains, to hang the public gaze  
Of every passer by, a scorn for fools  
To aim their arrows at, their foolish wits,  
To the amazement of the angels, who  
Scarce dare to turn their glance on this cruel  
world,

Lest from their angel eyes drop heavenly tears  
Upon their harps beneath, sad wonder seized  
At man's unholy deeds, slow growth of love.  
O Cromwell, Cromwell, there shall come a time  
When England yet shall make proud boast of  
thee,

Her dauntless son, worthy her old renown !  
But now rude merriment and drunken feasts  
Fill all the land, and honour is sunk low ;  
License and coarseness reign, liberty flies  
To other states where men more nobly live.  
O my much wept for land ! have brave men's  
tears

And blood alike for thee been shed in vain ?

*Puritan.* Unhappy land, given o'er to base  
delights,

How changed from that fair England once we  
knew !

Milton, this morn, threading the bosky dell  
Of Burnham, where the beech and oak grow free  
With a wild beauty famed the country round,  
I came across a group of revellers,  
Noisy with wine, their country's good forgot,  
Thinking but how to crowd their days with joy,  
Careless and thoughtless as their thoughtless

King,

Lost to all noble aims. Loudly they laughed,  
And clanging cymbals clashed by nymph-like  
hands

Made a mad music for the foolish feet,  
Where the wine-dripping Bacchus sits in state  
By the fresh fountain of a green-leaved dell ;  
And white rose-footed maidens lead the dance,  
Flashing their sparkling eyes, and waving arms  
To catch unwary youth, joy-wildered, who,  
Seized by enchantment of their beauty fair,  
In the great terrible sweet sweat of love  
Fling reason to the wind and worship folly.  
Sad contrast this to those staid times of old !

*Milton.* Cromwell is dead. Tho' lingering time  
be slow,

**154    ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS.    [ACT V.**

The rolling years yet vindicate the dead,  
Truth will dispel the clouds of ignorance  
That rest upon his memory. He was one  
Misunderstood in life, dishonoured dead ;  
But truth crowns all, and Time is ever true  
To memory of just men, for such loves he,  
And all I crave of Time, for him, my friend,  
Who wants no honour from the years to come  
More than will justice give, is justice due.

**FINIS.**

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